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Containing Communism in Texas: How the Right Interpreted the Cold War, 1945-1965

Frank Delao Delao

University of Texas at El Paso, fdelao@midland.edu

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CONTAINING COMMUNISM IN TEXAS: HOW THE RIGHT IN TEXAS
INTERPRETED THE COLD WAR,
1945-1965,
DISSERTATION

FRANK VASQUEZ DELAO III

Doctoral Program in History

APPROVED:

Ernesto Chavez, Ph.D., Chair

Sandra McGee Deutsch, Ph.D.

Jeff Shepherd, Ph.D.

Jose Villalobos, Ph.D.

Charles Ambler, Ph.D.
Dean of the Graduate School

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by

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Dedication

I would like to dedicate my dissertation to my Father. Frank Jr. has always been there for me and helped keep me focused on the project. Additionally, my Mother Pat, wife Samantha, and three kids (Jordan, Mia, and Diego) have also been by my side during the journey through the Ph.D. program at UTEP. I would not have been able to complete the dissertation if it wasn't for the support of these very important people in my life.

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DISSERTATION

by

FRANK VASQUEZ DELAO III, B.A., M.A.

DISSERTATION

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Introduction

The Cold War manifested itself in various institutions and localities; one key area was Texas. Although historians have examined how domestic anti-Communism functioned within government agencies, the academy, and the domestic sphere, no one has focused on specific institutions in Texas during this era. This study examines the implementation of a conservative domestic strategy of containment in the Lone Star State from 1945 to 1965, paying close attention to how rightwing and anti-communist groups viewed and reacted to issues such as segregation, labor, and immigration. In looking at these fields, I will demonstrate that conservative Texans, as a means of preserving traditional society, invoked Cold War rhetoric to challenge social reforms in their state. Additionally, they also accused reformers of having communist ties in order to vilify them and deter any challenges to the existing power structure. This periodization derives from the fact that 1945 marked the end of the Second World War and the beginning of the Cold War, and 1964 witnessed the passage of the Civil Rights Act, followed by the Voting Rights Act in 1965, and a new era of liberalism initiated by President Lyndon B. Johnson's Great Society. A vital part of this study is to connect these themes and place them within the context of the Cold War and demonstrate how rightwing anti-communist groups attacked issues like desegregation, organized labor, and immigration (legal and illegal) within that scope.

This study is guided by a series of questions. Among them are: What form did anti-Communism take in West Texas? How was it manifested? What caused the rise of anti-Communism in the region? What groups constructed and perpetrated an anti-Communist ideology in the region? How did existing right wing groups view and engage with anti-Communism? How did fringe groups like the Ku Klux Klan and other white supremacy groups

react to issues like desegregation and immigration? Did they try to link them to the fear of communism? What was the role of law officials during this period? How did religious officials view and engage anti-Communism? With these questions in mind, this study seeks to understand how the Cold War in Texas was influenced by national trends, but also how it was uniquely manifested in the region. For example, the state's attempt to uphold Jim Crow laws was a phenomenon taking place throughout the state and the relocation of white families to suburbs in order to leave the inner cities which had larger populations of people of color, was occurring nationwide.

In order to better situate this study, a discussion of the historical literature that has examined how Cold War ideology affected the domestic sphere is needed. In their scholarship, historians have studied the roots of anticommunism and its effect on domestic policies. Richard Hofstadter was one of the first scholars to focus on anti-Communism. He, along with other academics writing in the 1950s who were writing in Consensus/Structural Functionalist mode, sought to understand the phenomenon as it was occurring. Their articles appeared in the book *The Radical Right*, first published in 1955. In "The Pseudo-Conservative Revolt," Hofstadter argued that the radical right was "far from pleased with the dominant practical conservatism of the moment" which was what the Eisenhower administration represented.¹ They veered away from the traditional conservatives of this time out of a strong suspicion that communist agents were constantly monitoring their lives and threatening to destroy Americans' civil liberties.

Hofstadter labeled this contingent the *pseudo-conservatives*. To the pseudo-conservative, Hofstadter insisted the United States was always "about to fall victim to

¹ Richard Hofstadter, "The Pseudo-Conservative Revolt (1955)." In Daniel Bell and David Plotke, eds., *The Radical Right* 3rd edition (New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 2001), 76.

subversion.”² The increase of government regulations dating back to the New Deal on business activity only confirmed the notion in the eyes of these conservative groups that they were being spied upon and monitored. Pseudo-conservatives attached this form of bureaucracy to a liberal and even more so communist agenda to corrupt traditional American society.

Hofstadter further expounded on McCarthyism in his book *Anti-Intellectualism in American Life*, written in 1962, Hofstadter argued that the rise of conservatism during the Cold War paralleled the rise of business. Thus those that opposed conservatism were mainly labeled intellectuals. Anti-intellectualism, Hofstadter argued was the “anti-Semitism of the businessman.”³ There was nothing wrong with being conservative; however, Hofstadter argued that anti-communism created a mass movement that incited a more radical and conspiratorial view of the country.

In “Social Strains in America,” (1955) sociologist Talcott Parsons (published in *The Radical Right*) largely agreed with Hofstadter’s notion that the rise of an anti-communist movement had more to do with the growing dissatisfaction among right-wing proponents in this country than just Joseph McCarthy’s political crusade. Parsons identified McCarthyism as just a “symptom of the strains attendant on a deep-seated process of change in our society.”⁴ In “The Dispossessed,” (1962) also in the *Radical Right*, sociologist Daniel Bell argued that the political right in this country embraced Eisenhower’s election to the presidency in hopes of ending the welfare state and reeling back New Deal reforms; however, Eisenhower extended much of those

² Ibid, 78.

³ Richard Hofstadter, *Anti-Intellectualism in American Life* (New York: Vintage Books, 1966), 4.

⁴ Talcott Parsons, “Social Strains in America (1955).” In Daniel Bell and David Plotke, eds., *The Radical Right* 3rd edition (New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 2001), 227.

reforms.⁵ Like the aforementioned historians, Bell, a sociologist, insisted that McCarthyism was never an “organized movement” but rather an “atmosphere of fear generated” by McCarthy himself.⁶ And with McCarthy’s leadership several right-wing anti-communist groups emerged to facilitate the expansion of that fear in American society.

Clearly, the literature of the 1950s and early 60s emphasized that the rise of a radical right-wing movement in this country occurred as a response to the rise of McCarthy and McCarthyism in this country. However to Hofstadter, Parsons, and Bell, who were conservatives, McCarthyism could only be understood as a fringe movement whose roots were embedded in fear of a potential corrosion of American society at the hands of the communists or American liberal groups. The tumult of the 1960s impacted the way that McCarthy and McCarthyism was viewed. Those writing in this era and beyond perceived McCarthyism quite differently. Political Scientist Michael Paul Rogin argued against the notion that it was a mass movement. Rogin criticized Hofstadter, Parsons, and Bell’s perspectives and placed McCarthy within the larger context of conservatism in the era. In *The Intellectuals and McCarthy: The Radical Specter*, published in 1969, Rogin claimed a crucial element of mass movements was a significant fascist motive such as the opposition to certain racial, ethnic, or religious groups. Hofstadter addressed this in his critique that conservative business leaders had anti-Semitic leanings. Rogin however, claimed that McCarthyism was “free of anti-Semitism and provided no physical violence” against opponents.⁷

⁵ Daniel Bell, “The Dispossessed (1962).” In Daniel bell and David Plotke, eds., *The Radical Right* 3rd edition (New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 2001), 3.

⁶ Ibid, 4.

⁷ Michael Paul Rogin, *The Intellectuals and McCarthy: The Radical Specter* (Cambridge: M.I.T. Press, 1967), 215.

Robert Griffith's *The Politics of Fear: Joseph McCarthy and the Senate*, written in 1970, endorsed Rogin's view. According to Griffith, McCarthy's support lay in a political alliance of Republican conservatives and interest groups. According to Griffith and Athan Theoharis, McCarthyism was a "function of the Cold War and of the rhetoric used to sustain it."⁸ In *Seeds of Repression: Harry S. Truman and the Origins of McCarthyism*, (1971) Theoharis argued that the Right arose out of the anti-communist rhetoric initiated by the Democratic President Harry Truman. Further, the author suggested that Americans have historically been conservative and as a result, susceptible to "conspiratorial charges during times of national crisis."⁹ Theoharis added that conspiracy theorists can then blame the conspiracies on subversive elements and then recommend a purging of them.¹⁰

Those scholars writing in the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s were concerned with the origins of McCarthyism and focused their attention on politics, perhaps because they were so close to it and because the attention to the political sphere was traditional and due to its volatility in this era. Given this focus, Texas was never addressed by the authors discussed above, but it is important to understand how the era was first viewed. In the 1980s and beyond, the writing on McCarthyism waned and the emphasis was instead placed on conservatism's impact on various institutions. One exception however is the work of Ellen Schrecker whose *No Ivory Tower: McCarthyism and the Universities* (1986) examined how the conservative turn affected colleges

⁸ Robert Griffith, *The Politics of Fear: Joseph McCarthy and the Senate* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1987), xii.

⁹ Athan Theoharis, *Seeds of Repression: Harry Truman and the Origins of McCarthyism* (New York: Quadrangle Books, 1971), 5.

¹⁰ *Ibid*, 6.

and universities, while others looked at the domestic sphere. She followed this up with *Many Are the Crimes: McCarthyism in America* (1999), which examined how conservatism affected various strands of American life. For Schrecker, McCarthy remained a central figure in this conservative shift and the trend that bore his name was far reaching. Her work however did not examine Texas.

Schrecker's work was also part of a larger trend that focused on how McCarthyism/extreme conservatism impacted American domestic institutions. The rise of this conservatism in the 1950s attached itself to this notion of containing communism. Though the term was used to apply to American foreign policy, historians have since applied it to the national culture throughout the Cold War period. Much attention in this scholarship addressed American Cold War culture and how Americans addressed everyday issues involving the conflict. Diplomat George Kennan first coined the phrase *containment* in his famous long telegram of 1946 and suggested that the United States contain the threat of Soviet expansion on an international scale. The theory would ultimately dictate American foreign policy for the duration of the Cold War as the U.S. attempted to halt the spread of communism throughout the world. The Truman Doctrine, the Berlin Airlift, and the conflicts in Korea and Vietnam all derived from Kennan's ideas and were examples of American efforts to halt and contain communism in the world. The literature on all of these events is abundant. However, given that this study is concerned with the Cold War's impact on domestic issues, rather than foreign policy, my emphasis will be on those studies that have focused on changes wrought in the U.S. during this era.

Elaine Tyler May's *Homeward Bound: American Families in the Cold War Era* (1988), argued that there was a *domestic containment*. Her study was the initial contribution to Cold War

historiography from a domestic perspective. May compared the actual American home to be a metaphor for this domestic containment. Although her book does not examine Texas, it set a foundation for understanding this region. Perhaps the most interesting part of her book was the usage of Cold War terminology within the context of the domestic arena. This terminology was important in interpreting research because certain domestic words were applied within a Cold War and containment strategy context. The home was the primary subject of concern and it took on the model for the domestic form of containment. Its premise however, was inverted from the international form of containment. Unlike Kennan's philosophy, which encouraged containing communism where it already existed and preventing it from expanding into other areas, domestic containment stressed keeping communist influences from penetrating into the home.¹¹ May's book influenced others who concentrated on changes on domestic policy during this time. However it is clear that these historians were also responding to scholars of a previous era.

Furthermore, race was also an issue that historians inspected within the context of domestic containment. Certain racialized groups were persecuted for reasons that seemingly did not have anything to do with their race status. As a result of these perceptions of certain groups, some groups went to great lengths to prove their loyalty to the United States. In *Mexican Americans: Leadership, Ideology, and Identity, 1930-1960* (1989), Mario Garcia stated that groups like the League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC) condemned communism and argued that American democracy promised a better way of life.¹² Garcia also addressed labor conditions for Mexican Americans during this period as well. His coverage of the

¹¹ Elaine Tyler May, *Homeward Bound: American Families in the Cold War Era* (New York: Basic Books, 1999), 14.

¹² Mario Garcia, *Mexican Americans: Leadership, Ideology, and Identity, 1930-1960* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989), 37.

struggles of the International Union of Mine, Mill, and Smelter Workers (Mine Mill) was extensive in the El Paso area. Just within the Cold War time period, Mine Mill went on strike against the Phelps Dodge Corporation to demand the “end of regional wage discrimination.”¹³ Ultimately, the height of the Red Scare and McCarthyism led to a series of setbacks for the union.

Though his coverage of the Cold War era was not nearly as extensive, Zaragosa Vargas does address the issue of labor organization and its struggles during the period. In *Labor Rights are Civil Rights: Mexican American Workers in Twentieth-Century America* (2005), Vargas argued that labor rights equaled civil rights in the post-World War II age. The author cited examples of racially motivated violence in Los Angeles such as cross burning incidents by the Ku Klux Klan, beatings of African Americans and Mexican Americans, and general unprovoked police brutality.

Thomas Borstelman also addressed the issues surrounding civil rights and race relations concerning African Americans and how it pertained to the domestic Cold War struggles. When combining all of these works, we can see that expectations of everyday society relied heavily on traditional roles for family members. In this sense, efforts to promote civil rights throughout the Cold War were viewed with suspicion. Conservative anti-communists in the country reacted to these threats to their comfortable traditional dynamic by establishing a creative containment strategy of their own.

In, *The Cold War and the Color Line: American Race Relations in the Global Arena* (2001), Thomas Borstelman delivered a broader analysis on race relations. The book covered

¹³ Ibid, 190.

every presidential administration in chronological order during the Cold War and offered information on how each president approached the issue of race in foreign and domestic relations. Borstelman linked race to colonialism. He contended that American strategists wanted to “manage and control the efforts of racial reformers at home and abroad.”¹⁴ These officials feared that rapid progress towards racial equality would upset an established white supremacist colonial order. Instead, they preferred a gradual move towards racial reform so as to “build the largest possible multiracial, anti-communist coalition.”¹⁵ Borstelman suggested however that in facilitating this change, Americans had to realize the evident contradictions in their own society. He specifically cited the comparison of the American South with the Soviet Union. According to Borstelman both possessed obvious inequality within their populations and each also had legacies of indentured servitude as well as a record of human rights abuses.¹⁶ Although the author does not specifically discuss Texas, he does briefly talk about the state’s politics and argued that it followed the same trajectory as other southern states.

The review of the literature indicates that McCarthyism and conservatism was not a mass movement, but one rooted in politics. However, the historiography also points to domestic containment as an explanation for the repression of people of color in the era. Yet no one has examined how these issues played out in Texas to determine if the Cold War experiences in this region were similar to the rest of the country or if it was an anomaly.

¹⁴ Thomas Borstelman, *The Cold War and the Color Line: American Race Relations in the Global Arena* (Cambridge: Harvard University, 2001), 2.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Ibid, 4.

In an effort to rectify this situation, this study employs historian Elaine Tyler May's notion of domestic containment to explain how conservatism played out in Texas from 1945 to 1965. As shown above, historians such as May use the term to focus on their description of the home and how it was used in the context of containment within US borders. Though other authors mentioned in this study do not employ this term, the content of their research can arguably be placed within this same context.

This study is based on newspapers, government documents (state and federal), manuscript collections housed at various libraries, (including the University of Texas at El Paso, the University of Houston, the University of Texas of the Permian Basin, the J. Evetts Haley Library, Museum of the Southwest, the University of Texas at Austin) and interviews with braceros, activists, law enforcement officers, and political officials. It pays close attention to major incidents, crises, court cases and legislative acts and then focus on primary resources in and around those time periods. The most readily available sources for this project are newspapers throughout the state. Newspapers like the *El Paso Herald-Post*, the *Midland Reporter Telegram*, the *Odessa American*, San Angelo's *Standard Times*, the *Lubbock Avalanche Journal*, *Fort Worth Star Telegram*, and the *Dallas Morning News*, include coverage of significant national headlines like those mentioned earlier. In addition, the editorials and opinion sections along with general public responses in these papers are useful in determining the perspectives of Texans to these issues.

Another basic primary source are government documents including legislation proposed and passed in the era, most of which were accessed through Lexus-Nexus. These sources

indicate what elected officials supported legislation backed by conservative movements as well as how and why these bills were proposed and in some instances passed. In addition, proposed state bills during this time are utilized. House bill resolutions indicate comparisons of issues like immigration and labor organization to the spread of communism. The wording in these proposals is similar to descriptions of communist issues. These sources are readily available and allow me to determine potential patterns that develop between the start to the end of the Cold War in regards to federal legislation. Additionally, the state legislature proposed and in some cases passed bills intended to counter liberal reforms during this period. In looking at these sources, the purpose of this study is to convey how conservative Texans practiced their own form of domestic containment by labeling civil rights, labor, and immigration issues to an alleged international communist conspiracy. Thus these same conservative elements fought to prevent these reforms from infecting the state.

The chapters that comprise this study follow a thematic approach that is guided by chronology. **Five main** chapters comprise this study. The first chapter is an overview of conservatism in the state before the Cold War. Opposition to social reforms was nothing new to Texas. This chapter focuses on previous instances in which traditionalists connected the state's problems to a larger national crisis in order to garner as much support as possible. It will then move on to a discussion of the emergence of the Cold War on the domestic front on the national level. Chapter one sets the parameters for the study while the other chapters focus on key institutions that were affected by the Cold War and conservative anti-communist resistance. Thus the themes examine are the extreme right's attempt to preserve traditional society, segregation, labor, and immigration.

The second chapter focuses on the desire of right-wing groups to preserve a traditional conservative society where segregation was in place and unquestioned. *Brown v. Board of Education*, the Civil Rights Act of 1964, and the Voting Rights Act of 1965 eventually all impacted Texas. Despite attempts to delay desegregation and the removal of blatant racial discrimination, it was inevitable that these federally supported mandates would take place in the state. Put bluntly, the changes that took place during the Cold War threatened what predominantly white conservatives cherished. This chapter examines the efforts that conservative anti-communist business owners and political leaders made to establish a permanent power structure that revered Jim Crow culture.

Chapter three looks at segregation and significant court cases and reforms involving integration and how it played out in Texas. With so much taking place from a national perspective involving African Americans, it is crucial for this study to examine their status in this region. Also of importance was the existence of a Mexican American struggle in which civil rights organizations like LULAC along with the NAACP fought to end the practice. This chapter examines how Texans reacted to these cases and seeks to gauge if there was a difference in the reaction towards the integration of Hispanic versus African American students. It will also examine the delays in enforcing these mandates. This study intends to expose right wing groups' resistance to the integration of schools and how they did so under the guise of domestic containment.

Chapter four examines labor. Texas has always been largely an anti-union "right to work" state and the roots of that mentality can be linked to its traditional support of a conservative ideology; however, one can see active labor organizing taking place in the state and communities near its borders such as in New Mexico. Mine Mill was one particular union that

organized and demanded better working conditions but was constantly harassed by local and federal law enforcement. Much of the harassment was done under the guise that the unions were Communists trying to spread their rhetoric and beliefs into Texas. There are ample sources available to look at how labor operated throughout the state and how it fared in the face of anti-union groups and law enforcement.

The fifth chapter focuses on immigration. Like segregation, there was much attention placed on this issue by the federal government. The Immigration and Nationality Acts of 1952 and 1954 (also known as the McCarran-Walter Acts) provided a set of guidelines that naturalized citizens had to abide by if they wanted to remain in the country. Newly naturalized citizens risked deportation if they were perceived as being Communists or leftists. In addition, there were other programs that encouraged immigration during this time and created more animosity towards recent immigrants whether they were legal or illegal.

Anti-immigrant groups like the Ku Klux Klan organized border watches in California and Texas. These groups undoubtedly were present in Texas and had support from non-members in the local communities. The John Birch Society was one of the more prominent conservative groups that spoke out against immigration. And although it was not considered a violent organization like the KKK, it certainly was prominent in Texas and had more of an appeal to the mainstream population in the state.

Texas as part of the Cold War dynamic has been largely absent from the historiography. Though I propose to write a study that will shed light on the area during the second half of the twentieth century, it is a region that needs more coverage altogether. The Cold War allowed for conservative power brokers to continue their control over the area that it had in place long before this particular conflict. Still, several factors emerged during this period that threatened to derail a traditionally segregated society. Patriotism was always high in the area and thus support for

defense against international communism was never really in question. Conservatives used this willingness to fight communism to further their own causes, such as fighting against integration, immigration and labor organizing. They also used it to blur the standard racial divisions to prevent the unification of all minorities against them. Finally throughout the period, right-wing groups used several outlets to preserve their power and presence through several means.

Chapter 2: The Right in Texas before the Cold War

When looking at Texas history prior to the Cold War, one must understand that preservation of an Anglo power structure was maintained through segregation, suppression of labor activism, and resistance to nonwhite immigration. While each of these coincided on several levels, it was the continuation of a white Anglo-Saxon dominance over the state that was the common theme among all of them. Racial separation was the means by which segregation was institutionalized while labor and immigration intermingled on several episodes in the state's past. These are just a couple of examples but this study will reveal several instances in which two or more of these issues interacted with each other.

The preservation of a white power structure was predicated on the suppression of other races through political and intimidation factors. Politically, Texas experienced periods of populism, but even in those times, there existed a clearly defined racial hierarchy that placed an elite white population at the top and nonwhite groups at the bottom. From a legal standpoint, the perpetuation of this power was based largely on the Jim Crow model that was in place throughout the South. Though this study aims to explore this topic chronologically, my main approach will be thematic. The themes that I will look at are the creation or revival of conservative (in some cases extreme conservative) groups that wanted to preserve a traditional society in the state, the struggle to desegregate the state, organized labor, and immigration (legal and illegal). In order to provide a background for the issues of preservation groups, segregation, labor, and immigration, this chapter focuses on these topics in the era prior to the Cold War.

The conveyance of the white Anglo male in Texas history represented the key means by which this power structure was promoted within schools and the overall state narrative.

According to historian Sean Cunningham, “schoolchildren in Texas grow up with legends.”¹⁷ The most famous of those legends was the account of the battle of the Alamo where just 183 Texans seemingly held out against a much larger force in hopes of gaining its independence from Mexico. The story fails to mention that not all of the men at the Alamo were white males; however, the story revealed more of a pattern in what was to be focused on in Texas history more than just a perceived sacrifice for independence. Cunningham argues that, “Texas history is peppered with stories of conflict.”¹⁸ The conflicts that have taken place since Texan independence from Mexico were all examples of Anglo efforts to maintain power in the region against threats, perceived and/or real, over other racialized groups. Though the Texas Revolution was a major conflict in the state’s history, it was by no means the only one. The U.S.-Mexico War, the border rebellions by Juan Cortina and Catarino Garza, as well as the pursuit of Gregorio Cortez for the killing of a white sheriff, also exemplified the racial tension between Anglos and people of Mexican descent.¹⁹ Furthermore, the Plan of San Diego not only represented another clash in the early 20th century between both groups, it also threatened to overthrow the established power structure. Benjamin Heber Johnson said that a major goal of the uprising was to obtain liberty for the black race and independence for the states (including Texas) that once made up part of the Republic of Mexico.²⁰ Though the revolution never materialized, there was violence involved and several law enforcement agencies worked together to suppress it.

¹⁷ Sean Cunningham, *Cowboy Conservatism: Texas and the Rise of the Modern Right* (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 2010), 13.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Benjamin Heber Johnson, *Revolution in Texas: How a Forgotten Rebellion and its Bloody Suppression Turned Mexicans into Americans* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003), 22.

²⁰ Ibid, 72.

Beginning in the mid-19th century, these conflicts created a narrative that resembled that of the American South, rather than the West: Elite Texans resisted outside pressures and refused to abandon issues that they deemed important, such as slavery and states' rights. They were resistant to outside pressure, especially from the federal government and by the 20th century, foreign entities as well. Thus Texas history was "rooted in the notion of rugged individualism and states' rights, not merely the protection of slavery."²¹ The defeat of the Confederacy and Reconstruction forced the abandonment of slavery and the admission of civil rights to all citizens in the region. This did not end resistance but instead changed the context of Texas defiance to federal pressures. Slavery may have been abolished, but the nature of the Jim Crow laws assured the white population that its domination over blacks would continue.

Texas like the rest of the South, attempted to maintain the same power structure through legal means. The debate changed from slavery to issues like the defense of private property and disfranchisement. Private property was indicative of individualism while depriving nonwhites of the right to vote was yet another means of relegating them to a status in society that was inferior to whites. In suppressing the right to vote, the state implemented a poll tax to prevent a raise in political power for blacks and Tejanos. By the 1920s, only a quarter of the vote-eligible blacks retained their right to vote.²² In *The Establishment of Texas Politics: The Primitive Years, 1938-1957*, George Norris Green specifically referred to groups like the Minute Women who by the onset of World War II, were promoting the state's new principles of control. The Anglo power brokers still promoted states' rights and "fair taxes," but now also aggressively opposed organized labor and wanted Texas to be a 'right to work' state. But Green suggested that these

²¹ Sean Cunningham, *Cowboy Conservatism*, 14.

²² Robert Calvert, Arnoldo DeLeon, Gregg Cantrell, *The History of Texas*, 4th ed. (New York: Wiley-Blackwell Publishing, 2007), 283.

tenets had hidden meanings. For example states' rights meant "continued racial segregation," and limited federal government intervention.²³ Fairer taxes meant a stand against the progressive income tax while 'right to work' referred to Texas's anti-union stance.²⁴ In addition, conservative state officials also wanted control over the education system. The alleged reason for this was to inspect books to determine if there was evidence of leftist ideas. These inspections eventually led to libraries being forced to "censure books written by alleged communists" and to the requirements of teachers to take loyalty oaths and the dismissal of "controversial educators."²⁵

Preserving the Anglo power structure through legislation was an effective measure; however, extra legal means of intimidation were also utilized to hold down disenfranchised groups. According to Alwyn Barr, the prevailing racial view on social, political, and economic issues led to acts of violence or at least the approval of violent acts to be committed as "another means of maintaining white control and restricting" not just blacks but people of Mexican descent as well.²⁶ The most infamous of the white vigilante groups was the Ku Klux Klan (KKK). The KKK represented what Don Carleton referred to as the preservers of the "rural minded Texans' conception of true morality."²⁷ In *Red Scare!*, Carleton argues that the Klan's membership in Texas grew gradually through the first forty years of the 20th century and in bigger cities like Houston, monitored perceived left-wing organizers and civil rights activists by

²³ George Norris Green, *The Establishment in Texas Politics: The Primitive Years, 1938-1957* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1979), 124.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Ibid, 122.

²⁶ Alwyn Barr, *Black Texans: A History of African Americans in Texas, 1528-1995*, 2nd ed. (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1995) 136.

²⁷ Don Carleton, *Red Scare! Right-wing Hysteria, Fifties Fanaticism, and their Legacy in Texas* (Austin: Texas Monthly Press, 1985), 10.

wire-tapping telephones and putting spies at telegraph and post offices.²⁸ The Klan's actions often led to violence, but was not the only organization responsible for those types of actions. It was widespread throughout the state and in many cases, consisted of nothing more than an angry mob bent on demonstrating white dominance over any and all forces that opposed it. Texas ranked third in the nation in lynchings, averaging twenty-four per year in the first decade of the 1900s.²⁹ Black victims were lynched for charges ranging from rape to murder, to just being related to a known criminal.³⁰ As Barr states, it was common for large crowds to gather in a "holiday atmosphere" to watch the hangings take place.³¹ It was not only the means of punishment as shootings and beatings were also frequent occurrences. In many cases, there was no guarantee that those who were executed were even guilty of the crime.

In 1910, Allen Brooks, a 68 year old black man was arrested for the alleged rape of a 3 year old white child from a wealthy family. Despite proclaiming his innocence, an angry white mob beat, hanged, and burnt him before he ever got the chance to stand trial.³² Twenty years later, another mob in Sherman burned down a predominantly black neighborhood and county courthouse where a black man awaited trial. This took place while the sheriff and other law enforcement officials watched.³³ It was not until 1935 that the last legally sanctioned lynching in Texas occurred. Nevertheless, Barr claimed that whites "employed whippings, threats, and destruction of property to hold down negro wages and economic competition, to enforce black social subservience."³⁴

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Alwyn Barr, *Black Texans*, 136.

³⁰ Ibid, 137.

³¹ Ibid.

³² Michael Phillips, *White Metropolis: Race, Ethnicity, and Religion in Dallas, 1841-2001* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2006), 77.

³³ Alwyn Barr, *Black Texans*, 137.

³⁴ Ibid, 138.

People of Mexican descent were not immune to this poor and sometimes violent treatment. According to Zaragosa Vargas in, *Labor Rights are Civil Rights: Mexican American Workers in Twentieth-Century America*, Tejanos lived as subordinate members of society.³⁵ Much of the violence was carried out based on racial hatred and a perceived sense of racial superiority that the ruling white population had towards people of color. Similar to the Brooks lynching in Dallas, Antonio Rodriguez was also accused of a crime of which he professed his innocence. He was accused of killing a white woman near the town of Rocksprings, Texas in 1910. A mob of Anglo vigilantes forced their way into the town jail, took Rodriguez and ultimately burned him alive before lynching him.³⁶ Additionally, race riots involving white aggression towards both Mexicans and blacks were also common in Texas. These riots involving Mexicans and Mexican Americans were prevalent in the southern and western parts of the state. Tejanos often reacted as in the case of Gregorio Cortez and Catarino Garza to personal accounts of “harassment or to some act of injustice perpetuated upon the community.”³⁷ Law enforcement agencies were not reliable to protect people of color either. Organizations like the Texas Rangers lashed out at Tejanos because they suspected that they were conspirators of the 1915 Plan of San Diego that sought to take power away from the established Anglo leadership.

Though racial violence certainly existed in Dallas during the first half of the 1900s, there was also a clear racially charged rhetoric that emerged from this area that attempted to perpetuate a hierarchy based on race and class. Historian, Michael Phillips explains the popular belief amongst the wealthy Anglos in a community. This belief suggested that northern and western Europeans were responsible for civilization and thus, only the descendants of those people were

³⁵ Zaragosa Vargas, *Labor Rights are Civil Rights: Mexican American Workers in Twentieth-Century America* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005), 18.

³⁶ Arnoldo DeLeon, *Mexican Americans in Texas* 2nd ed. (Wheeling: Harland Davidson, 1999), 51.

³⁷ Ibid.

capable of managing a “free republic.”³⁸ Phillips also notes that whites deemed blacks to be “incapable of creating civilization, defined by Dallas Anglos as the creation of a technological, capitalist society conforming to Euro-American norms.”³⁹ In using this rationale, one can see the reasons behind suppressing the political voice of blacks in Texas as well as other people of color. Whether this perspective was genuinely believed in or not was a moot point as it gave elite Anglos the justification needed to maintain a power position in which to determine who could vote and who could not. Other decisions could be made based on this view, such as keeping society in Texas segregated.

This mindset was also propagated in school curricula as is evident by a look at textbooks provided to world history students in Dallas in the late 1920s. These books ignored nonwhite populations and their contributions to civilizations in the past. Nonwhite races were thought to have no cultural effects on modern civilization. The depiction of these groups to white elementary students was no better. For example, the defeat at the Alamo was portrayed more as a massacre at the hands of a barbaric enemy whereas the subsequent Texan victory at San Jacinto occurred largely because of “Mexican ineptitude.”⁴⁰ Missing from the narrative were the equally ruthless atrocities committed by Anglos upon Mexicans at San Jacinto as well as other conflicts in the state’s history.

When these depictions of Mexicans in the history books were added to the prevailing notions of people of Mexican descent, one can see how racism continued to be perpetrated. Alexandra Minna Stern argues that Mexicans in the 1920s were depicted as infected with disease

³⁸ Michael Phillips, *White Metropolis*, 12.

³⁹ *Ibid*, 67.

⁴⁰ *Ibid*, 68.

and unsanitary.⁴¹ Students that read the fabricated narrative of Texan independence and the portrayal of Mexicans in history could not help but affirm this stereotype.

Still the issue of race in relation to Mexican Americans was ambiguous. The roots of this problem can be traced back to the acquisition of Mexico's former northwest territories of California and New Mexico. Legal studies scholar, Laura Gomez referred to this dilemma in New Mexico after the U.S.-Mexican War as the contrast between two views: the dominant and the progressive. The dominant view suggested that Mexicans were not fit to be citizens because of their impure racial composition. The progressive view embraced the white Spanish roots of the people and its history of conquering the supposed inferior Indian groups of the region.⁴² Obviously the dominant view was based on racist beliefs but so was the progressive one as it ignored the harsh reality of the Spanish conquest of the natives. The Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, which gave Mexican citizens in the conquered territories American citizenship, at the very least allowed for a debate to be held regarding their racial status. Despite the provisions of the treaty, people of Mexican descent were still seen as different from the white Anglo population.

Starting in the 1920s, the efforts to categorize Mexican Americans as 'white' became a major goal of the League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC). The creation of LULAC was based on a goal of obtaining 'white' status as citizens in the U.S. Like African Americans, people of Mexican descent also experienced several forms of discrimination. In *Mexican Americans: Leadership, Ideology, and Identity, 1930-1960*, historian Mario García writes that

⁴¹ Alexandra Minna Stern, "Nationalism on the Line: Masculinity, Race, and the Creation of the U.S. Border Patrol, 1910-1940," in *Continental Crossroads: Remapping U.S.-Mexico Borderlands History*, ed. by Samuel Truett and Elliott Young (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004), 303.

⁴² Laura Gomez, *Manifest Destinies: The Making of the Mexican American Race* (New York: New York University Press, 2007), 62,

LULAC wanted integration as first-class citizens into white society.⁴³ The organization had a platform that promoted loyalty to the United States (not Mexico), opposition to illegal immigration, and English as the primary language. In doing so, LULAC and its supporters distanced themselves from African Americans. According to García, Mexican Americans “possessed their own prejudices against blacks.”⁴⁴ LULAC insisted that the main goal was to remove Mexican Americans’ status as ‘colored’ because it subjected them to de jure segregation. In addition, the group’s opposition to illegal immigration and its support of English as the people’s main language also intended to separate Mexican Americans from Mexicans.⁴⁵

LULAC made unpopular decisions such as opposing the Mexican Farm Labor Program (Bracero Program) and the entry of illegal immigrants into the country. This led to the organization’s support for the mass arrests and deportations of undocumented workers in 1954 in what was called Operation Wetback. Over one million undocumented immigrants were captured in the U.S. and forced to return to Mexico.⁴⁶ The other variable when looking at the issue of race and Mexican Americans was the economic development that transformed Texas in the early 1900s. Large labor forces were needed to work in the agricultural sector of the state which led to Anglo bosses wanting Mexican workers. Historian Neil Foley claims that the development of large scale cotton production from the south to the west after 1920 meant an increased “reliance on Mexican farm workers.”⁴⁷ Racial concerns over the increase of Mexicans in the state still existed, but there was also a separate white contingent that promoted the need for a foreign

⁴³ Mario Garcia, *Mexican Americans: Leadership, Ideology, and Identity, 1930-1960* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1991), 46.

⁴⁴ Ibid, 48.

⁴⁵ Though I use the term ‘Mexican’ at times to describe how Anglos viewed all people of Mexican descent, in this case it is used to define people from Mexico as defined after the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo.

⁴⁶ Ibid, 53.

⁴⁷ Neil Foley, *The White Scourge: Mexicans, Blacks, and Poor Whites in Texas Cotton Culture* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), 4.

workforce and dismissed fears that Mexicans would cause the collapse of the white population on the basis that they “were simply too inferior to represent a threat to white Americans.”⁴⁸

Furthermore Mexican immigrants worked for lower wages and during the 1920s, white businesses had subscribed to the notion that profit and production trumped race. Working-class whites became less desirable as a workforce because of their demands for higher wages and their greater likelihood of organizing. Due to these concerns, working-class whites were vilified as “thriftless and unreliable white tenants.”⁴⁹ Foley argues that both Mexicans and African Americans were preferred for labor because of the animosity that developed between white owners and poor white workers. The issue existing in cities as well, such as Dallas where wealthy citizens essentially viewed the white working class similarly to blacks and Mexican Americans, in that it carried “racially impure blood and was thus incapable of civilization.”⁵⁰ Despite this division between the wealthy and working class whites, there was no serious challenge to overthrow the power structure that was controlled by the white elites. Instead, working class whites feuded with Mexicans and African Americans. The perceived racial superiority of poor whites put them at odds with other marginalized groups whose plight was much more similar to theirs.

Thus segregation of whites (both rich and poor) from other races, especially blacks became the norm. Dallas legally implemented housing segregation in 1916 as a means to separate neighborhoods by race and discourage any interference with those boundaries.⁵¹ White citizens of Dallas upheld this segregation by destroying the homes of blacks that moved into

⁴⁸ Ibid, 40.

⁴⁹ Ibid, 39.

⁵⁰ Michael Phillips, *White Metropolis*, 62.

⁵¹ Ibid, 63.

neighborhoods that were not classified as ‘colored’ neighborhoods. Historian Quintard Taylor confirms Phillips’s research but also explains that this form of coercion occurred throughout the state especially in the major cities. By the 1940s, bombings against blacks that moved into white neighborhoods had become a common occurrence. And instead of providing protection, black families were discouraged from pursuing residence in white areas. Furthermore, white homeowners were urged not to sell property to nonwhite people.⁵²

Similar to the housing, segregation was also emphasized within the education system. It was obvious that the state did not prioritize learning in general. Perhaps this was because of a lack of trust toward the federal government and a fear that schools aimed to indoctrinate students; however, nonwhite students were even more neglected within this system. Texas had the highest illiteracy rate in the South in 1900. Communities like Texas City, Texas, a coastal city near Houston opened schools for white students but did not offer the same opportunity to blacks until a decade later, and even then the school district allocated twice as much funding to the white school.⁵³ Despite increased funding for white students, one can assume, based on empirical data of that period, that spending did not compare favorably to the rest of the country since the South in general lagged behind the rest of the nation in regards to education. Though this had a lasting negative impact on the working class white population, the neglect towards “colored” schools indicated where nonwhite Texans fit in the social hierarchy.

Efforts to integrate Mexican Americans into white schools were easier but not without problems. LULAC was at the forefront of these struggles and it got involved in several court cases (not just in Texas) regarding the issue. The 1930 case, *Salvatierra v. Del Rio Independent*

⁵² Quintard Taylor, *In Search of the Racial Frontier: African Americans in the American West, 1528-1990* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1998), 236.

⁵³ Alwyn Barr, *Black Texans*, 156-157.

School District was a key victory in achieving the desegregation of Mexican American schoolchildren;⁵⁴ however, the case was ultimately overturned because it allowed for segregation of first grade and younger students that could not speak English. But LULAC, along with other organizations, successfully integrated numerous public facilities throughout the Southwest such as theatres and public pools.⁵⁵ Cases such as *Mendez v. Westminster* in California provided the precedence for such acts to be achieved in other parts of the country as well. Many of the grievances by Mexican Americans about segregation mirrored those of blacks. In regards to schools, the so called 'Mexican' schools were inferior to white schools in terms of funding, cleanliness, overcrowding, and a poorer quality of teachers.⁵⁶

Still one must look at the efforts by the wealthy elites to separate the races and question if the true motives were simply based on the belief of racial superiority. The working-class white population did not reap any of the benefits of the elites and were often looked down upon as well. Perhaps the only privilege enjoyed by working-class whites was that their skin color gave them a false sense of superiority over nonwhites. This 'privilege' gave them the right to live in neighborhoods and attend schools that people of color could not; however, one must question the true motives of segregation as a potentially controlled process of keeping working class whites and nonwhites apart. In doing so, both groups were prevented from realizing that they had much more in common than they realized and thus kept them from realizing that the elites were the primary agents that kept them from socioeconomic advancement.

Unfortunately, this division also occurred between nonwhite groups too. Mexican American activists' efforts to bring down segregation for their people undermined the same

⁵⁴ Robert Calvert, *History of Texas*, 338.

⁵⁵ Mario Garcia, *Mexican Americans*, 21.

⁵⁶ *Ibid*, 54.

efforts made by African Americans. There was no unified movement in the first half of the 1900s to bring an end to inequality. LULAC aimed to obtain ‘white’ status for Mexican Americans and thus be allowed to integrate them with traditional white students. This did nothing to benefit black students facing the same struggle.

Just as segregation divided racial groups in Texas, labor groups also experienced inequality and unfair conditions in the workforce. The issue of labor was driven by an expanding national industrial economy. Texas, along with the rest of the American southwest and northern Mexico became a hub for the harvesting of natural resources and agriculture. This was the case since the latter part of the 19th century and into the 20th. Mining centers sprouted up throughout the region and were controlled by powerful companies such as Phelps-Dodge and American Smelting and Refining Company (ASARCO). But not only did these companies provide employment for the people of the region, they also grew to control other facets of the economy and thus controlled the actual population. In *Fugitive Landscapes: The Forgotten History of the U.S.-Mexico Borderlands*, Samuel Truett indicates these businesses created company stores and made profits by selling necessities to their workers. In addition, both companies “increased their power over land and life through expanding circuits of railroads, mines, banking, and trade.”⁵⁷ As a result, the region suffered through heavy exploitation of its natural resources and received little in return except for projects that only facilitated more extractions from the land.

Although Mexicans had crossed the Rio Grande since the state’s inception, their homeland’s evolution ensured their immigration in large numbers. It is estimated that

⁵⁷ Samuel Truett, *Fugitive Landscapes: The Forgotten History of the U.S.-Mexico Borderlands* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008), 102.

approximately one million Mexicans immigrated to the U.S. during the Mexican Revolution.⁵⁸ This ensured that they would face hardships in a state teeming with racial segregation and a segmented labor force. Race, segregation, labor, and immigration would intertwine in this period, especially given Texas's proximity to the border. The known availability of a cheap labor force south of the border undoubtedly affected the dynamics of labor. To be hired in the U.S. meant these workers needed to emigrate to the country; however, labor opportunities were not the only reason that led to an increase in immigration from Mexico. As mentioned before, the Mexican Revolution erupted in 1910 and for the next decade served as the primary driving force of Mexican immigrants to the U.S.⁵⁹ People left Mexico seeking to escape the violence, but the economic development that took place along the border resulted in increased immigration as well. This led to a series of legislative restrictions.

The Quota Acts of the 1920s, particularly the Johnson-Reed Act of 1924, discouraged immigration from the eastern hemisphere but did nothing to legally limit it from south of the border, as the rise of commercial agriculture created a high demand for cheap immigrant labor; however, historian Mae Ngai writes that American consuls in Mexico began "more strictly to enforce" the existing immigration laws by banning contract labor and implementing literacy tests on prospective Mexican immigrants.⁶⁰ Furthermore, Ngai states that this led to increased illegal immigration and Congress's designation of "unlawful entry" into the country as a felony.⁶¹ In doing so, the issue of illegal immigration became associated more with Mexican immigrants than

⁵⁸ Mario Garcia, *Desert Immigrants: The Mexicans of El Paso, 1880-1920* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1981), 4.

⁵⁹ Arnaldo DeLeon, *Mexican Americans in Texas*, 67.

⁶⁰ Mae M. Ngai, "The Architecture of Race in American Immigration Law: A reexamination of the Immigration Act of 1924," *The Journal of American History* 86, No. 1 (Jun., 1999), 90.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*

any other nationality. According to Ngai, “illegal became constitutive of ‘Mexican,’ referring, not to citizens of Mexico, but to a wholly negative racial category.”⁶² Moreover, this distinction that nativists made did not separate immigrants from Mexican Americans and thus both groups were deemed to be the same and a foreign presence in the country. Because of this, Mexican immigrants and Mexican Americans alike encountered resentment and racism in the U.S. To complicate the issue even more, Mexican migrants were valued by big agribusinesses as a source of cheap labor which meant that their presence in the nation and the workforce would continue regardless of nativist sentiment.

Yet, anti-restrictionists assured anti-immigrant groups that Mexicans would not be a problem. Mexicans were portrayed as “docile and law abiding” by company bosses so as to pacify the growing xenophobic sentiment.⁶³ Mexicans were thought to be less likely to organize and because their home country was nearby, it was believed they would be more likely to leave once the demand for work declined. Moreover, anti-restrictionists also claimed these immigrants would be confined to working in the agricultural fields and thus not “jeopardize the fabric of white society,” which was the main nativist concern.⁶⁴

Still entry into the U.S. was not easy or pleasant for immigrants. According to historian Alexandra Minna Stern’s, *Eugenic Nation: Faults and Frontiers of Better Breeding in Modern America*, Mexicans crossing over legally at border stations during the early 20th century were put through a process of decontamination. As part of the procedure, immigrants were bathed, scrubbed and examined for lice and smallpox. Once they went through the process, American

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ Ibid, 69.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

health officials marked them as “ADMITTED” to allow them entrance into the U.S.⁶⁵ The procedures that immigration went through to enter the country were obviously driven by paranoia over the number of people crossing the border and into the United States. There was a perception that they were dirty and/or potentially carrying diseases that could threaten the health of white Americans. In general, the method can be compared to the tagging of animals or even slavery from the prior centuries, in which immigrants were de-humanized. Admitted was really a mark that identified outsiders and all negative connotations and stigmas that came with the label.

The 1920s represented a period of increased Mexican immigration coupled with the turmoil brought on by the revolution in their home country. This can be attributed to the demand for larger labor forces in agriculture to accommodate the U.S. economy during and after World War I. With the beginning of the Great Depression, anti-immigrant views rose. Now that widespread unemployment was a national concern, Anglos who had refused low-paying jobs in the past now had to accept those positions and did so at the expense of Mexican workers. American-born Mexicans were associated with immigrants and faced similar struggles. Though groups like LULAC opposed illegal immigration and even the legal Bracero Program that in initiated in the '40s, Mexican Americans were often associated with recent Mexican immigrants in the 1930s, as a group responsible for the lack of available jobs. Both Mexicans and Mexican Americans fell victim to repatriation drives. Over 250,000 Mexicans and Mexican Americans were sent to their homeland (or perceived place of origin) between 1929 and 1939.⁶⁶ Mexicans were forcibly removed not only because of racial discrimination but even more so by the status

⁶⁵ Alexandra Minna Stern, *Eugenic Nation: Faults and Frontiers of Better Breeding in Modern America* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), 57.

⁶⁶ Neil Foley, *White Scourge*, 175.

of the economy. The demand for a large unskilled labor force disappeared with the onset of the Great Depression. This demand ultimately resumed with the beginning of World War II.

To understand the push-pull dynamics of the Texas economy, one must look at what leads to the state's boom and bust labor demands. Texas's vast oil reserves led to its emergence as a petroleum producing state. This resulted in the massive industrialization of the state in the early 1900s, which in turn led to a growing dependence on markets that were far away from the region. The outbreak of World War I in 1917 only broadened that dependence.⁶⁷ To accommodate not just the industrialization of the state but also the agricultural sector as well, American companies hired workers from Mexico. These workers were the most appealing because of their unfamiliarity with the region and concept of the wage labor system. They were more likely to work for cheaper wages than American workers. It was not until the Great Depression of the 1930s that the demand for Mexican labor declined. Even then, the demand returned a decade later.

South Texas was one such region drawn into the development of an industrial economy. As industries like agriculture, railroads, and construction grew, so did the demand for cheaper labor. Up until the 1920s, large landowners particularly agribusinesses were able to rely on black and white workers through forms of sharecropping; however, as black workers began moving further north, the landowners looked for migrant workers. These companies according to Evelyn Nakano Glenn, an Ethnic and Women's Studies scholar, "shifted to corporate farming methods which depended on a vast army of seasonal Mexican laborers."⁶⁸ This change in labor preferences though did not change how employers managed their work forces. Laborers,

⁶⁷ David Lorey, *The U.S.-Mexican Border in the 20th Century* (Wilmington: Scholarly Resources, 1999), 56.

⁶⁸ Evelyn Nakano Glenn, *Unequal Freedom: How Race and Gender Shaped American Citizenship and Labor* (Boston: Harvard University Press, 2004), 163.

especially Mexicans were often trapped in a form of debt peonage that obligated them to the company bosses that hired them. Law enforcement officers assisted companies in maintaining this control by capturing workers that tried to leave and charging them with vagrancy. To pay off their fines, Glenn says that these workers were forced to work in the cotton fields.⁶⁹

Furthermore, Mexican workers were paid less than their white American counterparts.

Historian, Emilio Zamora states that the lower pay was based on a “dual wage system” that paid Anglos more for the same jobs.⁷⁰

Workers in general were paid less in Texas than in other parts of the southwest. The reason for the disparity in pay was that labor organizing was relatively ineffective in the state. Organized labor led to strikes which created instability and disorder.⁷¹ Yet, this does not explain why unionizing was ineffective in Texas. The Lone Star State never experienced the number of strikes that other parts of the country did. During the unrest of the 1930s, there were only six strikes compared to over 140 in California.⁷² Neil Foley attributes this to the lack of industrialized urban centers in Texas in and around the agricultural center of the state. Only Dallas and San Antonio were cities near these agrarian areas and they were located on the fringe of this geographical sector. Instead of organizing, black and white workers preferred to migrate to these cities and find urban jobs. In the case of Mexican and Mexican American workers, forming unions made little progress because of the state’s proximity to the Mexican border where company bosses could easily hire replacement workers, better known as scabs. The repatriation drives of the 1930s were also a deterrent to labor activism by any of these people

⁶⁹ Ibid, 157.

⁷⁰ Emilio Zamora, *The World of the Mexican Worker* (College Station, Texas A&M University Press, 2000), 10.

⁷¹ Robert Calvert, *History of Texas*, 217.

⁷² Neil Foley, *White Scourge*, 184.

that were fortunate to have jobs during this decade. Even the passage of the Bracero Program in 1942, which hired guest workers from Mexico, met resistance in Texas. This occurred not just because of racist views towards the workers but also because of the program's perceived "infringement on [companies'] free market rights" to hire potentially undocumented workers for even less wages than the braceros.⁷³ Despite the program's endorsement by the federal government as being essential for economic production, braceros experienced poor treatment in the U.S. They were subjected to inadequate living conditions and medical treatment and were constantly harassed by law enforcement officials.⁷⁴

Organized labor was not completely invisible in Texas. Workers of all races and ethnicities struggled to find support against businesses. It ultimately led to blacks and Mexicans to turn to more leftist groups such as the American Communist Party. The alliance with the Communist Party was made only because they were unable to find anyone else willing to defend them. Mexican Americans saw this partnership as a means of accomplishing their aims. One success that emerged from their plight was the creation of Mine Mill in El Paso. Mario Garcia states that the union brought forth "relative material gains and economic security."⁷⁵ Additionally, the Communist Party aided Mexican workers by conducting campaigns that provided legal assistance against discrimination, police harassment, and deportation.⁷⁶ Nevertheless, the Communist Party could only do so much and with the onset of the Cold War, its influence dwindled. Anti-communists after both world wars successfully created hysteria that falsely attached unions and leftist activists to Soviet communism, thus labeling organized labor

⁷³ Ibid, 206.

⁷⁴ Mario Garcia, *Mexican Americans*, 95.

⁷⁵ Ibid, 198.

⁷⁶ Zaragosa Vargas, *Labor Rights are Civil Rights*, 64.

as ‘un-American.’ Mine Mill was one such casualty that fell victim to these perceptions by the end of the 1940s.

Though World War II did not alleviate the racial conflict within the state, Texas did experience a major economic upswing and braceros from Mexico eventually came to work in Texas. The hierarchy of power did not change and the outbreak of the Cold War only introduced new means by which the dominant Anglo population could use to control the state and oppose nonwhite groups. The introduction of the Containment policy not only justified U.S. actions abroad, it was also practiced within American borders as a method to prevent the supposed evils of communism from infiltrating into the country. This domestic form of containment was evident in the Lone Star State. Just as before the conflict, the preservation of a white power structure was the key to maintaining a stable society in Texas. U.S. Cold War foreign policy clearly defined the Soviet Union as an enemy but identifying domestic threats was much more complicated. The Cold War atmosphere allowed for traditional conservative power brokers to continue their control over the area. Communism and the fear of it spreading throughout the world and eventually into the U.S. presented an opportunity for an Anglo population to conveniently attach its agenda of white supremacy. It was a radical and drastic alternative to the societal norm.

The Right in this country believed communism could potentially infiltrate and was in fact behind moves to desegregate, demands for improved civil rights, and labor unrest. The spreading of leftist or subversive ideas could easily occur in schools if allowed to integrate which was why segregation was deemed to be needed. Communists could easily disguise themselves as Mexican immigrants crossing the border into the country. Furthermore, the organization of labor was a phenomena that reeked of communist conspiracy. These feelings though most likely

based on paranoia were conducive to a white population intent on maintaining its power over the state.

This study will be thematic in its approach as I will look at three major issues during the Cold War period in Texas: education, immigration, and labor. In addition, the existence of right-wing groups like the KKK which had been around before this period but experienced a spike in membership, and the John Birch Society which was created during this time, became heavily involved in attaching these issues to the fear of communism, and thus preserving traditional society through propaganda. The decades of the Cold War would see these issues exacerbated as the Lone Star State tightened its grip on those it perceived as disloyal and threatening to populations within its borders.

Chapter 3: Preserving Tradition: How Extreme Conservatives Resisted Change

The foundation of domestic containment was fear; however, the fright was not just from a communist threat. Instead it was a dread that traditional society in the United States would be overrun and Americans, particularly white Americans, would be forced to change the way they lived their lives in a manner that they either could not conceive or tolerate. The word “communism” was used interchangeably with other “isms” such as socialism and Bolshevism. These were merely buzzwords to set off alarms for Americans. Extremists on the right associated the terminology with issues of major concern to them such as civil rights, voting rights, and equality. Instilling this fear through propaganda or hyperbolic speeches was the primary focus of groups like the John Birch Society, the Anti-Communist Crusade, Texans for America, Ku Klux Klan, and local ultra conservative leaders throughout West Texas. This chapter focuses on extreme right-wing groups in Texas that believed social reform was a byproduct of communist influence over the country and thus resisted such changes.

In certain cases, these organizations invoked rhetoric that was used as a national platform while in other instances more personal and localized means of extending the message were utilized by these groups. Anti-communism was a strong sentiment held by the majority of Americans. Both the Democratic and Republican parties shared the belief; however, ultra-conservative figures and leaders believed domestic issues like civil rights were part of an international communist plot and accused mainstream politicians of not opposing the ideology with enough vigor and in fact, often supporting it. Rightwing groups in Texas saw the sweeping changes vis-à-vis civil rights of the first twenty years of the Cold War as a threat to their way of

life and organized to keep them out by stirring up fear and outrage as well as creating imaginary connections between progressive domestic reforms and communist ideology abroad.

Initially, the arguments for preserving mainstream society presented evidence of the benefits of a capitalist economy as opposed to a communist one. In a 1945 article, “As We Go Marxing on...,” the Committee for Constitutional Government boasted the American system of free enterprise reduced maximum hour work weeks while increasing the workers’ wages. Additionally, the piece mentioned the luxuries, like radios, cars, and life insurance policies available to Americans in larger numbers than the residents of Europe and the Soviet Union. The message was simple, if Americans wanted “collectivism and statism,” characteristics of communism, privileges would end.⁷⁷

The idea of collectivism frightened radical right-wing groups because they believed that the country was headed towards a “welfare state.” This fear was rooted in the opposition to Franklin Roosevelt’s New Deal programs of the 1930s whereby the federal government became more involved in the national economy than ever before. Extremists believed that the New Deal was a threat to free enterprise. The assumption made by FDR’s administration was that collectivism promised better living and health conditions to everyone, but the focus was predominantly placed on the poor and any negative connotations that came with that label. For example, low income workers were not mentioned. Instead, the focus was on the “shiftless” who looked to get “something for nothing.”⁷⁸ Looking only at this segment of the population implied that hard working Americans would be forced to support the supposed large lazy class of people who chose to do nothing, for they knew they would be supported by the federal government

⁷⁷ “As We Go Marxing On,” *Committee for Constitutional Government, Inc.* (1945): 5.

⁷⁸ “The Welfare State: Do you Want it America?” *Committee for Constitutional Government, Inc.* (1945): 3

regardless of employment. A final warning made in the article suggested that the, “American social welfarers [sic] propose to out Bismarck the founder of modern Germany.”⁷⁹ This implied the potential dangers of this form of government as it alluded to what Germany eventually became under Adolf Hitler. This was ironic given that Hitler’s Germany was a fascist state led by a radical right-wing element. Leftist critics would argue that certain anti-communist American groups sought a society similar to that of Nazi Germany in the 1930s.

In a 1948 article titled, “Winning an Election...through fear,” the former Sheriff of El Paso, Chris Fox, claimed that the Democratic Party was maintaining its influence over the region through this strategy. Fox stated that voting for the Democrats would not eradicate “hungry stomachs, idle machines, empty purses, and general devastation and utter personal and business ruin.”⁸⁰ Fox accused the Democrats of promoting a sense of collectivism and then said that the future of the country would remain bright so long as Americans can “retain [their] individuality,” which was yet another subtle inference that the political adversaries (Democrats) threatened to endanger that trait.⁸¹ To the right, individualism was synonymous with free enterprise/capitalism whereas collectivism was another word for communism.

Furthermore, Fox continued in this speech and dismissed the Democratic propaganda as an attempt to “weaken...American virtuousness, integrity, and golden opportunity.”⁸² In making these statements, Fox did not directly target communism or its supposed negative influences on society, but rather embraced traditional American virtues which in and of itself placed these in

⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁰ Chris Fox, “Winning an Election... Through Fear,” Special Collections, University Library, University of Texas at El Paso, El Paso.

⁸¹ Ibid.

⁸² Ibid.

contrast with adversaries that could counter them. Praising individuality implied opposition to collectivism.

By the start of the Cold War, it was no secret that Chris Fox was a staunch anti-communist. He was the Sheriff of El Paso County throughout the 1930s and constantly purged alleged communists in labor unions in the community even prior to this period. He was revered as a local leader because of his past law enforcement career and by the 1950s, was a local bank executive. Moreover, Fox, whose son was killed at the infamous Battle of the Bulge during World War II, was seen as a strong supporter of the military, which meant even more in El Paso given the proximity of Fort Bliss. He delivered several speeches throughout the early years of the Cold War in which he promoted the ideas of a free market economy and attacked communism as a threat to the American economic system.

Fox also defended the expanded role of the military on an international level after World War II. He believed China's fall to communist forces gave George Kennan's containment theory credibility. In 1951, Fox justified U.S. involvement in Korea as a matter of protecting American interests. Echoing Kennan's foreign policy objective, he claimed that the fall of Korea would ultimately lead to the loss of Japan, Indo-China, India, and soon after "our life line in trade and materials so vital to our lives as a free people."⁸³

In order to understand Fox's view, it is important to note the state of affairs within the U.S. as well as around the world. From a foreign policy perspective, the first ten years of the Cold War featured several events that caused a sense of paranoia within the country. Americans, particularly ultra-conservatives, viewed these events through a complex lens. One side supported American intervention in Korea in 1950, as noted in Fox's speech. Prior to the

⁸³ Chris Fox, (Remarks Before The Executive Club, El Paso, Texas, March 7, 1951), Special Collections, University Library, University of Texas at El Paso, El Paso.

conflict, the Truman administration succeeded in getting Congress to fund governments in Greece and Turkey to fight off communist rebels. Known famously as the Truman Doctrine, the military and economic support of anti-communist governments in those two countries was a declaration of Cold War by the United States against Soviet communism. Truman's decision to aid Berlin in 1948, which ended with the Soviets backing down, was also seen as a face-off with the communists. It was also a significant political and international victory; however, the "fall of China" and its subsequent alliance with the Soviets only further gave credibility to the notion that communism was on the rise. This made U.S. intervention in Korea a sensible option. If South Korea were to fall, then the others as Fox noted would do the same.

On the other hand, these same groups strongly opposed the creation of the United Nations. An American role of any kind within a world community organization was seen as a communist conspiracy. Later groups would eventually accuse American officials under Truman that promoted American involvement in the United Nations as communists. Even leaders from moderate civil rights groups like the League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC) objected to American involvement in a world organization. LULAC representative, Alonso Perales expressed his concern in a letter to Texas Congressman, Paul Kilday. Perales worried about communist influence within the UN, because "the name of God was never mentioned," nor was there an "invocation" during a nine week period in which he attended."⁸⁴ This particular concern exposed another fear of anti-communists that in that the leftwing ideology did not promote any religion. Thus the fear was that the Americans could potentially lose their freedom of religion by being included in such an organization.

⁸⁴ Alonso Perales to Honorable Paul J. Kilday, October 18, 1951. The Capitol, Washington, D.C.

In addition, several events in the late forties added to the paranoia that the government had secretly succumbed to communist influence. The first of these was Truman's Executive Order 981, in July of 1948 which integrated the armed forces. The integration of the armed forces was also seen as a government infringement on people's rights by the extreme right as it viewed any type of civil rights reform as a communist front. This was followed by the Whittaker Chambers case, following month. Chambers accused U.S. State Department employee Alger Hiss of being a communist and this only added legitimacy to the fear Soviet agents operating within the government. Additionally, the USSR's detonation of its first atomic bomb in August 1949 was looked upon as only being possible because via communist agents infiltrating the U.S. The ensuing paranoia led to the emergence of Wisconsin Senator Joe McCarthy's 1950 accusation that large numbers of communists were operating within the U.S. government in and provided a national voice for this fear-mongering.

Chris Fox echoed much of what McCarthy said in his warnings against communism. In a speech delivered to the local El Paso Masonic Lodge, Fox urged the members to be more active in fighting communism at home. For Fox, it was not enough that American soldiers were abroad "in an effort to salvage something for [them] through stemming the Red tide, which [had] no other objective than to engulf the world."⁸⁵ It was their duty as "Christian soldiers" to "keep it from happening here" because "freedom [was] not free."⁸⁶ Fox was not the only person in Texas warning of the dangers of communism. The state's Attorney General, John Ben Shepperd, attacked communism as "immoral" and considered it the equivalent of a "predatory animal."⁸⁷

⁸⁵ Chris Fox, (Remarks at the 31st Annual Banquet of the Five Points Masonic Lodge No. 1137 – Jan. 15, 1951), Special Collections, University Library, University of Texas at El Paso, El Paso.

⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁸⁷ John Ben Shepperd, "Freedom's Advocate: Excerpts from the Patriotic Speeches of John Ben Shepperd, Attorney General of Texas," *The Texas Heritage Foundation, Inc.*, Austin, John Ben Shepperd Collections, Dunagan Library, University of Texas of the Permian Basin, Odessa.

Speeches against communism that were delivered throughout West Texas communities were not unique as they took place all over the country; however, the invoking of the term “communism” in Texas was done to address issues that supposedly threatened traditional white society.

Communism goal of economic and social equality was of most concern to traditionalists. The integration of the armed forces in 1948 and the aggressive pursuit of civil rights reforms in the 1950s threatened to unravel segregated society in the south. Thus much of the anti-communist rhetoric in speeches, propaganda, or in legislation (state and federal), often associated communism with civil rights. And even though these groups were not exclusive to the south, leaders in Texas embraced anyone willing to speak out against the same opposed elements. For example, the National Council for American Education, founded in 1948, warned that school teachers during the 1950s were being hired to spread socialist propaganda and to “rob America’s youth of their self-reliance and substituting dependence on the government.”⁸⁸ The NCAE intended to evaluate textbooks and determine which were “un-American.” Additionally, the organization in 1952 set out to create local chapters throughout American communities so as to monitor schools to “expose subversive teachings and subversive activities on the part of teachers and professors.”⁸⁹ The NCAE championed itself as the organization “actively defending the American way of life and actively opposing Socialism and Communism.”⁹⁰ Its 1952 pamphlet, entitled *Pro-American Books and Pamphlets* provided a list of literary works that the NCAE strongly recommended for “active” Americans to read. The organization warned that if

⁸⁸ *Must American Youth Be Taught That Communism And Socialism Are Superior to Americanism?* National Council for American Education, January 1, 1952.

⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁹⁰ *Pro-American Books and Pamphlets: with which you should be familiar, and which every active American can read with profit* (New York: National Council for American Education, 1952), 2.

Americans continued to be taught that socialism was “the good way – the right way,” then it would not be “long until this once free nation becomes another totalitarian state.”⁹¹

As Texas Attorney General, John Ben Shepperd was active in promoting the NCAE throughout the state. The NCAE’s actions extended McCarthy’s accusations that intellectuals were communist agents. Its legacy can also be seen in clauses that were added to the National Education and Defense Act of 1958, passed during the Eisenhower Administration in response to the first Soviet satellite launch, which promoted the teaching of science, mathematics, and technology. Eisenhower had bipartisan support to increase spending and placed greater emphasis on these subjects. But while the legislation increased expenditures on national education, it came with price, it required all prospective educators to sign a loyalty oath in order to secure employment. . The NCAE warned that schools and textbooks served the ulterior motive of recruiting children for the communist cause⁹²

By the mid-1950s, civil rights activists had achieved more gains. The most notable being the 1954 Brown vs. Board of Education ruling, which ordered the desegregation of schools throughout the country. Opposition to this mandate in Texas was immediate. Conservatives argued that the Supreme Court’s action allowed for the federal government to exceed its authority and therefore violated the Tenth Amendment of the Constitution. Much of the opposition to this case in Texas, as well as the rest of the South, was based along this argument. One group formed to resist impending integration was the Waco-based Freedom of Choice, Inc., which disseminated its platform via propaganda. In one such endorsement, the head of the group claimed that the federal government was promoting a new social structure in which “those of

⁹¹ Ibid.

⁹² *Must American Youth Be Taught That Communism And Socialism Are Superior to Americanism?*

other race and color now enjoy a preferred legal status over the white man.”⁹³ In addition, the organization argued that the Supreme Court had exceeded its authority and violated the ninth and tenth amendments of the constitution.

The most publicized opposition to the Brown decision came in in 1956 when one hundred and one Congressmen collectively issuing the “Declaration of Constitutional Principles”. Often referred to as the “Southern Manifesto,” this bloc of southern politicians posited that the Supreme Court and the federal government usurped their constitutional powers by undoing the “separate but equal” doctrine. Furthermore, they placed the defense of states’ rights within the containment context claiming that, “outside agitators [were] threatening immediate and revolutionary charges in our public school systems.”⁹⁴ The term ‘outside agitator’ was often used to describe both communist agents and someone that wanted to upset the status quo.

Opposition to the Brown decision did not just come from elected officials. Several groups arose to challenge the Supreme Court and other proposed civil rights reforms. It was not a coincidence that another organization, the John Birch Society, founded in 1958 was even more forceful in its attacks on all branches of the federal government. The organization named itself after an American Baptist missionary and military intelligence officer killed by Chinese communists in August 1945, shortly after the end of World War II. It was established in Belmont, Massachusetts, and its membership consisted primarily business leaders. The group’s members believed that the federal government covered up Birch’s death.⁹⁵ Because of the

⁹³ *It Informs You! It Makes You Think! It Inspires You To Action! The Civil Rights Revolution*. Freedom of Choice, Inc., June 6, 1956.

⁹⁴ “Southern Congressmen Issue Manifesto against Brown vs. Board Decision: Declaration of Constitutional Principles (1956),” In Kevin Sheets, ed. *Sources for America’s History*, 8th edition (Boston: Bedford/St. Martin’s Press, 2015), 675-76.

⁹⁵ James & Marti Hefley, *The Secret File on John Birch*, (Wheaton: Tynesdale House, 1980), 11.

circumstances surrounding Birch's death, the organization believed that a conspiracy existed, namely that U.S. officials were discreetly aligned with international communists. The organization was unrivaled in its aggressive and accusatory resistance to a changing society during the Cold War.

From its inception, the organization blasted people for their views. It even slandered Eisenhower, a Republican, accusing him of having communist ties. The group's founder, Robert Welch wrote what he referred to as a long letter (though it was more like a manuscript) entitled, *The Politician*, in which he proposed that Eisenhower's rise to power was part of an elaborate communist conspiracy. Welch accused the President of making pro-communist decisions in both foreign and domestic theaters, saying "Communist influences made him put the whole diplomatic power, economic power, and recognized leadership of this country to work, on the side of Russia and the Communists."⁹⁶ Welch was referring to Eisenhower's part in the invasion of Europe in which American forces' arrival on the shores of Normandy helped take pressure off of the Soviets in their struggle against Nazi Germany. In addition, Welch condemned the President for reaching a cease-fire agreement with North Korea and China to stop fighting. He claimed that Ike's presence in the White House only increased the "Communist influence" within the federal government.⁹⁷

Additionally, Welch set the tone for the organization's attacks on the Supreme Court. He claimed that the group's decisions from 1954-1957, "[ripped] gaping holes in our Constitution."⁹⁸ Birchers saw events, whether foreign or domestic, like *Brown vs. Board* and civil rights activism, as part of a global communist conspiracy to overthrow traditional U.S.

⁹⁶ Robert Welch, *The Politician* (Belmont: Belmont Publishing Company, 1964), 6.

⁹⁷ *Ibid*, 137.

⁹⁸ *Ibid*, 285.

society. It criticized the high court's decisions on numerous occasions and demanded the impeachment of Chief Justice Earl Warren, not just for his ruling in *Brown vs. Board*, but also for the decision to overrule the non-communist loyalty oath as part of the National Education and Defense Act.

Further, at a national meeting in Belmont, Massachusetts in 1960, Birchers charged that one of Warren's decisions led to some "seven hundred Communists and pro-Communists" to receive U.S. passports which they believed led to these "fellow travelers" being able to take information back to their communist superiors abroad.⁹⁹ The John Birch Society became popular in Texas during the early 1960s with one of its most prominent state leaders, J. Evetts Haley, residing in West Texas. Its primary function during the period was the distribution of information in the forms of newspaper ads, pamphlets, letters to politicians, and film showings. West Texas State University (now known as West Texas A&M University) in Canyon, Texas was a hotbed of Birch activity as Haley's residence was nearby. On one occasion in April 1961, the society held a four -hour meeting at a local member's home in which two films, *My Latvia* and *Operation Abolition* were shown. Both films focused on "the communist menace," and its threats upon college campuses.¹⁰⁰

In addition to the films, local leaders defended their stance on providing information on the communist threat. Robert Welch even went as far as to accuse President Eisenhower of being a communist. Eisenhower's continued compromises on international issues after Korea, like the Suez Crisis, only made him more suspicious to Birchers. More importantly though on the domestic front, his decision to enforce the Supreme Court's ruling of desegregation of all

⁹⁹ John Birch Society. 1960. Bulletin for March. Bulletin for the Meeting of the John Birch Society, Inc. Belmont, Massachusetts, February, 29.

¹⁰⁰ "Birch Goals Set in Canyon Meeting," (April 13, 1961), Special Collections, J. Evett Haley Library, Midland.

public schools, especially made him many enemies among the radical Right. Granted, this was part of Eisenhower's presidential responsibilities, to enforce the Supreme Court's ruling. Personally, the commander-in-chief opposed the decision but carried out his duties because it was his obligation. Birchers saw this as unacceptable. In the mind of Birchers, there was no in-between. Either one was an anti-communist or a communist. This was the main reason why it was an organization that struggled to gain full acceptance by mainstream conservatives. In the Birchers' minds, only the opposite ends of the political spectrum existed and if their views were not shared, its members automatically labeled them as communists or sympathizers.

One example of Birchers attacking a traditionally conservative outlet took place in San Angelo, Texas. The accusations were levied at the city's newspaper. In an editorial in San Angelo's *Standard Times*, the "fanatical rightist" movement was thought to have originated in Midland, Texas and then "spread across West Texas."¹⁰¹ The article acknowledged that while there certainly were dissenters against Warren's decisions, they did not go as far as the Birchers in labeling him and other political figures as communists. From January to February in 1961, the San Angelo papers published numerous opinion pieces from readers as far away as Midland, attacking the media outlet's supposed soft stance on communism.

J.T. Rutherford, El Paso's U.S. Congressman and Republican, also incurred criticism from Birchers as well as supporters of the group. One such accusation came from a self-identified Grand Dragon of the Aryan Knights of the Ku Klux Klan in Waco, who attacked organizations like the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) for its "subversive acts" and the apathy of the federal government to do anything about it.¹⁰² Rutherford claimed to have received numerous "irate letters" from Birch supporters claiming the

¹⁰¹ "Fanatical Rightists Also Posing Dangers," *San Angelo Standard Times*, March 17, 1961, E3.

¹⁰² J.T. Rutherford, "Rutherford Reports to the People," *El Paso Herald Post*, April 7, 1961.

group was not exclusive to radical right-wing extremists and that the concerns of the organization were legitimate.¹⁰³

Still, Rutherford was certainly not alone in his outspoken criticism of the organization. In fact, most conservatives in office at least publicly spoke out against the group charging it as being radical. Senator Stephen Young of Ohio described the group as “fascist” and accused Welch of hoping to spread “racial hate into a political movement for power.”¹⁰⁴ The sentiment was shared by the NAACP which argued that the John Birch Society was against civil rights.¹⁰⁵ This was a claim Birchers would not disagree with as they claimed the movement reeked of communism.

But the John Birch Society did not just accuse government officials of being communists. It also targeted traditional groups like churches. These criticisms were launched most prominently in Texas against churches that preached the social gospel, which attempted to apply biblical teachings to current “secular and political problems.”¹⁰⁶ A significant message within the social gospel centered on economic conditions of the poor. This was an idea frowned upon by American protestant and economic conservatives, and when looking at the rise of liberation theology in Latin America during this same period, one can see how groups like the Birch Society framed the issue within a domestic containment context.

According to the John Birch Society, the preaching of the social gospel was another way communism was infiltrating the country. Promotion of this doctrine in nearby Latin America legitimized in Birchers’ eyes the fear that communist/socialist tenets had contaminated and therefore threatened traditional society. It should be noted that many Birchers were prominent

¹⁰³ Ibid.

¹⁰⁴ “Senator Describes Welch as Dictator, Far Right Charlatan,” *Midland Reporter Telegram*, July 16, 1961, 8A.

¹⁰⁵ “Birch Society Draws NAACP Leader’s Attack,” *Midland Reporter Telegram*, July 17, 1961.

¹⁰⁶ “The John Birch Society: Attack on Churches Gets Most Attention,” *El Paso Herald-Post*, March 30, 1961, 2A.

businessmen. The founder, Robert Welch owned a profitable candy company. J. Evetts Haley owned large amounts of land in West Texas. Any message concerning the economic ills of the poor would seem to threaten their own business interests.

To silence liberals, Birchers used questionable methods, such as illegal background checks and collecting names of leftists in the state in order to combat their opponents. Even members of the organization became uncomfortable with the tactics. Mrs. W.L. Goldston, a member of the Houston chapter of the society quit in July 1961 because the founder wanted to “compile a list of liberals.”¹⁰⁷ Goldston said she received a bulletin from Robert Welch asking local members to gather information on the “background, connections, an activities of leading American liberals, socialists, and communist sympathizers.”¹⁰⁸ The appeal to develop lists of political opponents was reminiscent of McCarthy’s witch-hunts of the previous decade in which the senator claimed to have lists of alleged communists working throughout the State Department. Those McCarthy did not accuse still risked a hearing before the House Committee on Un-American Activities (HUAC) and faced its scrutiny as well as that of other congressional officials. One can only suspect that the John Birch Society intended to gather lists of potential opponents for similar purposes.

Although Goldston resigned from the group and opposed these requests, others abided. In Amarillo, local Birchers compiled a list of five men who “were known communists.”¹⁰⁹ In Lubbock, the group launched a promotional telephone campaign claiming it was fighting “against what they [felt was] too much centralization in government.”¹¹⁰ One member, Nimma

¹⁰⁷ “Prominent Member Quits Birch Society,” *Midland Reporter Telegram*, July 16, 1961, 8A.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid.

¹⁰⁹ Jerry Hall, “Secretive ‘John Birch Society’ Is Operating in City,” *Lubbock Avalanche Journal*, July 31, 1961, 10A.

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

Pamlin, denied that a list of local communists existed, yet acknowledged that, “a town of this size (Lubbock) should or could have two or three cells.”¹¹¹ The gathering of lists of suspected communists and the claim of greater centralized government were synonymous according to Birchers.

Ironically, the John Birch Society, which accused communist sympathizers of spreading distrust in the populace, was itself accused by Senator Young of Ohio of disseminating “fear, hatred, and suspicion.”¹¹² In an article in the *Texas Observer*, Dr. John Bagalay agreed with Senator Young: “The society’s presumption that the seriousness of the situation justifies extreme actions can be held only by one who either has no political ideals at all, or who fails to see that the means are an integral part of the end in the American political system.”¹¹³ Bagalay’s thoughts on the issue were impactful in that he described the organization as counter-democratic. It was a group that had monolithic beliefs and refused to accept anything or anyone that challenged it. In a sense, the John Birch Society held beliefs that bordered on fascism for they were not the views of the more mainstream conservative political groups of the time.

It should be noted that Dr. Bagalay was a self-professed conservative who argued that the John Birch Society held radical right-wing views that were not shared by the conservative mainstream. Nevertheless, the organization responded against such claims with more accusations. Birchers took out numerous newspaper ads that were concise in responding to their detractors. One such ad appeared in the *Midland Reporter Telegram* for several consecutive weeks, claiming the attacks on the John Birch Society were “specifically ordered by Moscow as a major task for communists in 1961.”¹¹⁴ And it did not matter where the attacks on the group

¹¹¹ Ibid.

¹¹² “Senator Describes Welch As Dictator, Far Right Charlatan, *Midland Reporter Telegram*, 8A.

¹¹³ John Bagalay, “A Conservative Views the Birchers,” *The Texas Observer*, September 29, 1961, 7.

¹¹⁴ “John Birch Society,” *Midland Reporter Telegram*, April 18, 1962, 16A.

came from either. Though most of their attacks were towards the political Left of the spectrum, Birchers frequently dismissed detractors from the Right as well. As noted with the long-winded attack on Eisenhower, the society deemed moderate Republicans to be part of the problem that led to the unraveling of traditional society. If anything, they fit into the conspiracy even more so as their tactics could be seen as more subtle in carrying out a perceived master communist plan. The organization had created a convenient narrative for their cause. According to it, communists were already operating in the country orchestrating its downfall. For example, the changes that upended segregation was supposed proof of that and the criticisms of the group by anyone, even from government officials could be easily categorized as secret communist agents or something that was part of a grand communist conspiracy. It was an extension of the Red Scare and McCarthy's attacks of which Welch was a strong supporter.

By the mid-1960s, the radical right in the U.S., epitomized by the John Birch Society, viewed civil rights legislation as proof that communists had infiltrated the federal government. Supporters of such groups however, were not easy to identify. Welch was a wealthy businessman and it was believed much of the membership was of the same stock. For this reason, the Birch Society was prominent in Texas. According to historian Louis Kestenburger, "more Texas money has been available for conservative-rightist politics than in any other state in the Union."¹¹⁵ Though not all of this money went to radical elements of the right wing, it was clear that such groups had strong support among Texas businessmen. George Rockwell, leader of the American Nazi Party went to Houston in March 1962 to visit with some of the party's supporters. He claimed the city was home to several "card-carrying, dues paying members," which included "Businessmen" whose names he would not disclose.¹¹⁶ Furthermore, the Civil

¹¹⁵ Louis Kestenburger, "A One-Time Politician in Texas," *Jahrbuch für Amerikastudien*, Bd. 8 (1963), 226-231.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*

Rights Movement during this time made extreme right groups more appealing to people that opposed such reforms. Membership in groups like the John Birch Society increased and even mainstream officials like former Secretary of Agriculture in the Eisenhower administration Reed Benson had joined the group. His membership was just one indication of the group's appeal. During this time the number of Birchers in the West Texas region grew phenomenally." Because of this and their opposition to civil rights legislation, the West Texas-New Mexico coordinator of the John Birch Society, Ray Ahlstrum claimed that the group was the main target of communist sympathizers within the Civil Rights Movement.¹¹⁷

Benson was not the only mainstream conservative attracted by the rise of a growing extreme right element. This led to the Republican nomination of Barry Goldwater. In the campaign to get him elected, conservatives deemed the 1964 election as the opportunity to "restore states' rights and constitutional government."¹¹⁸ In addition, "Volunteers for Goldwater," the organization created to spearhead the Arizona senator's election, argued that his election would prevent the continued "appointment of numerous public officials who fervently believe in and promote one-world socialist government."¹¹⁹ The "Volunteers for Goldwater" invoked rhetoric commonly used by groups like the John Birch Society in claiming its political opponents had allowed communists to gain power in the country. It was their (the conservatives) duty to gain power and contain the threat to American society.

Despite the perceived closeness towards the GOP, because of its conservative ideals, the John Birch Society's criticism of Republican leaders such as Eisenhower and Nixon came as a surprise to mainstream conservatives; however, the roots of the group's attacks on the

¹¹⁷ "Birch Society Slates Speaker." *El Paso Herald-Post* (El Paso), June 8, 1965, sec. B.

¹¹⁸ *Facts about The President: A Call for Volunteers*, Volunteers for Goldwater, 1964.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*

Democratic Party can be traced back to the presidential election of 1960. John F. Kennedy's northern origins and liberal views were criticized and the society would credit him for the failures of the Bay of Pigs the following year. It even went so far as to suggest a conspiracy involving CIA collusion with Castro. Kennedy's running mate, Lyndon Johnson represented a much different example.

Johnson was a former Congressman and Senator from Texas and perhaps someone Birchers felt should have adhered to traditional Lone Star State values. To the society, Johnson was not a typical southern Democrat that emphasized individuality and states' rights, but rather someone that consorted with the likes of groups that the society opposed and in fact labeled as communists. These groups included racial minority organizations, but others were involved in education, civil rights and labor.

By 1967, the John Birch Society had delivered pamphlets calling for the creation of TACT (Truth About Civil Turmoil) teams to counter the demands of the civil rights movement. These committees were to draw up "convincing arguments and proof, how the civil rights agitation and riots fit directly into Communist programs."¹²⁰ Martin Luther King Jr. was the focal point of these plots, as he was charged with using civil rights as a front for an ultimate civil war.¹²¹ The lens through which the John Birch Society viewed the country can best be described as a duality of good versus evil. In "The Metaphysics of the John Birch Society," Paul Friedman explained that the organization's goal was to maintain or even retain traditional society. He referred to it as getting "back to the fundamentals" and taking the country to "the way things were in the good old days."¹²² It was an artificial time in which the current negatives, that is

¹²⁰ Robert Welch, "What Can I do?" *John Birch Society, Inc.* Belmont, Massachusetts, May 1967, 23.

¹²¹ Ibid, 25.

¹²² Paul Friedman, "The Metaphysics of the John Birch Society," *The North American Review*, Vol. 253, No. 1 (Jan., 1968), 34.

civil rights groups and excessive federal government, supposedly did not exist. But these problems resembled communism to Birchers and conveniently fit their narrative. They believed that anything deemed un-American must be evil as everything considered to be American was good. Civil rights, collectivization, big federal government were not traditional beliefs and thus all elements reeked of communism. According to Bircher logic, this made these issues un-American and evil. In the mind of the Bircher, this could only mean that evil existed in the U.S. because communists “not only infiltrated they instigated the civil rights movement in America,” and thus introduced a threat to the norm.¹²³

J. Evetts Haley agreed with the absolutist views of the Birchers. As a member of the group, he and others frequently spoke out against anything deemed to promote civil rights or anyone associated with the federal government. In his 1964 book, *A Texan Looks at Lyndon*, Haley attacked Johnson’s political record, insinuating that he was to blame for the imagined rise of communist power in the U.S. For example, he even suggested that Johnson was behind the assassination of President Kennedy, another target of the Birchers. And while this accusation may have been an exaggeration on Haley’s part, his hatred for Johnson and his pro-civil rights platform was obvious. Though not claiming it was Johnson’s idea, Haley argued that he certainly was part of a cover up that was designed to “white-wash the communist conspiracy and cover up the truth.”¹²⁴ He believed this charge was credible because of Johnson’s appointment of an investigatory commission of the assassination to be headed by one of the Birchers’ favorite villains, Chief Justice of the Supreme Court, Earl Warren. As a final warning to potential supporters, Haley warned that Johnson, a native Texan, had betrayed his homeland:

¹²³ Ibid, 35.

¹²⁴ J. Evetts Haley, *A Texans Looks at Lyndon: A Study in Illegitimate Power* (Canyon: Palo Duro Press, 1964), 210.

“He has turned his back completely upon the individualistic traditions of Texas and the ways of the South, which in essence means his repudiation of the ideals and traditions of America.”¹²⁵

Haley’s discontent for Johnson stemmed from the President’s record on civil rights. Both the Civil Rights Act and Voting Rights Act, two landmark achievements of the Civil Rights Movement, were signed into legislation under the Johnson administration. Additionally, while a Congressman from Texas, Johnson also aided in other civil rights issues, including the establishment of the Little School of 400 in 1957, which provided bilingual education in the state, and facilitating Felix Longoria’s (a Mexican American veteran killed in action) burial at Arlington Cemetery eight years before, who due to segregation laws was denied internment in his hometown of Three Rivers, Texas.¹²⁶

Johnson had a track record of supporting civil rights issues even before becoming president and that was seen by elements of the extreme right as a betrayal. For Haley, a Johnson presidency was viewed as a threat to the “[preservation] of this marvelous land.”¹²⁷ The prominent Bircher’s not so subtle suggestion that Johnson was in some way behind the assassination of President Kennedy and his subsequent investigation, which consisted of people that were already loathed by the society, all conveniently fit into the conspiracy that communists had infiltrated the federal government. Johnson’s approval in Texas was not strong among conservatives. This was the same base that the group tried to appeal to with these accusations. Furthermore, in Haley’s opinion, the Warren Commission’s investigation into Kennedy’s murder

¹²⁵ Ibid, 229.

¹²⁶ Rodolfo Acuña, *Occupied America: A History of Chicanos*, 6th ed. (New York: Pearson Longman, 2007), 212.

¹²⁷ J. Evetts Haley, *A Texan Looks at Lyndon: A Study in Illegitimate Power*, 230.

was just another example of collectivism and the story was spun to present the notion that the threat needed to be contained.

But Haley was not only a prominent member of the John Birch Society., he was also associated with Texans for America, another notable group that was active in promoting a radical right agenda. Based in Canyon, Texas, this organization echoed much of the John Birch Society's tenets and used terminology that involved ideas linked to domestic containment. One of the organization's pamphlets warned of the danger of federal authorities intruding into state and local affairs, overriding community law enforcement to enforce the "revolutionary rulings of the Supreme Court."¹²⁸ This was a reference to recent activity throughout the South to assure that desegregation was being done per the court's rulings. It additionally implied that the civil rights movement and leaders were behind the unraveling of traditional society, charging that the aims of the federal government were to make Americans "subservient to Washington."¹²⁹

One example of this federal intervention occurred when U.S. Attorney General Nicholas Katzenbach told a law enforcement conference in Midland, Texas of his intention to levy federal charges on an Alabama Sheriff charged with shooting and killing a civil rights activist. This officer was acquitted of charges on a state level and Texans for America argued that Katzenbach was violating the Constitution by holding the man liable in a double jeopardy scenario. In addition, Haley as the State Chairman of the Texans for America expressed outrage at the FBI for implying that local and state officers in Texas "would not hesitate to lie when called to the witness stand" if a similar case occurred in their state.¹³⁰ Haley urged Texans for America members that per the Constitution, local police was the appropriate and only law enforcement

¹²⁸ J. Evetts Haley, *The Woman Constitutionalist*. Texans for America, December 4, 1965.

¹²⁹ Ibid.

¹³⁰ Ibid.

needed in the state. His final warning to the group was to “keep these power-mad agitators out of Texas.”¹³¹ This was another instance of Haley wanting to keep government influence out of his state. Containment in this sense was interpreted as keeping out the ills of society. In this example, the federal government once again portrayed the negative attempting to infiltrate into Texas.

Although Haley, and on a larger level the John Birch Society and Texans for America, most likely over-inflated the numbers of its members and others that endorsed their objectives, there was still an indication that the radical right-wing gained more support, especially in the 1960s amidst the height of the civil rights movement.

Perhaps the most extreme right wing of these groups in Texas was the Ku Klux Klan (KKK). The Klan was not near its size of the 1920s, but its leaders acknowledged a spike in its membership during their time, and it credited the recent civil rights gains in the country for the increase. The most notable of these was the Supreme Court’s *Brown vs. Board* decision in the previous decade.¹³²

Though the KKK’s numbers were never as high in Texas as they were in other states like Mississippi and Alabama, the secretive organization was a threat at this time especially because of the charges against its members for the murder of civil rights activists in both aforementioned states. Also, when looking at the history of the Klan, the group’s notoriety was known most prominently in two other periods in U.S. history: Reconstruction (1865-1877) and the 1920s. The organization was created during Reconstruction as a vigilante group that resisted civil rights for recently freed slaves and the federal intervention in rebuilding southern states. In the 1920s,

¹³¹ Ibid.

¹³² Nicholas Chriss, “Supreme Court School Decision of 1954 Brought the Slumbering Klan Back to Life,” *El Paso Herald-Post*, March 31, 1965, 10B.

the Klan's numbers grew on a larger national level because of the opposition to immigration, the first Red Scare, and the rise of fundamentalism. In both of those instances, the group grew in numbers because of a perceived threat to traditional society by supposed outside agitators. It was no coincidence that the Klan experienced another increase in membership during the Civil Rights Movement.

During the first two decades of the Cold War, the country experienced a combination of another Red Scare, the Civil Rights Movement and the rise in Christian fundamentalism. One can argue that fundamentalism came as a response to the other two, but regardless, once more a fear had been invented that threatened the traditional way of life. Moreover, the agency tasked with monitoring Klan activity was the FBI.¹³³ The government agency never had popular support in Texas or the rest of the South, which only fit the Klan's narrative that the federal government was out to infringe on the rights of the individual. When coupled with a more general right-wing narrative, Texas was viewed as being infiltrated by a centralized government.

Texas history was rooted in individuality. Its legacy consisted of southern traits, hence its embracing of states' rights; however, it also, included a past that resembled that of the West and the frontier. This previous era was viewed as an era in which rugged individualism was necessary in order to survive. On the other hand, it was also a state that had a prominent history of segregation and even worse, a legacy of hate and resentment towards people of color. The state of the nation in the first two decades following the Cold War threatened to change those proud traditions of Texan society. The introduction of change upon the state was nothing new as it was seen prior to this period. But the rise of communism in other parts of the world posed a new threat to this foundation. Evidence of communists operating in the U.S., although isolated incidents was

¹³³ Goerge Carmack, "Klan Completes 100th Year with Membership Increase," *El Paso Herald-Post*, May 19, 1965.

enough proof for ultra conservatives as they saw communist ideology as the grand conspirator threatening to derail their interpretation of American society.

Chapter 4: Segregation in Texas: The Red Menace Behind Desegregation

The Brown vs. Board decision set off a movement in the South to prevent racial integration at all costs. Texas was no different in this opposition. Although Governor Allan Shivers announced that the state would honor the Supreme Court's decision, he also alluded to the complications in transitioning to this new way of life. Shivers and other Texas officials expressed economic concerns, but they also feared that the denouncement of segregation would overrun the state's traditional society. The former Confederacy's legislators famously responded to the Brown case by issuing the Southern Manifesto, a brief but clear declaration of their opposition to the decision, which they argued was an infringement upon states' rights and the "values" the Southerners held so dear to them.¹³⁴ The manifesto laid out the South's determination to overturn the decision but also vilified the federal government in the process.

Several studies have documented southern opposition to the federal government, which of course dates back to the creation of the republic and the framing of the Constitution. Perhaps the culmination of this rivalry was the Civil War, but the animosity continued beyond that point and is still in existence today; however, scholars have not portrayed this issue within the context of the Cold War. The South in the 20th century embraced a notion of national patriotism. While there exists an element of southern loyalty, southerners have generally supported American expansion and foreign policy and the ideal of American exceptionalism. In Texas, this notion was even more apparent in that its residents adore their history as a once republic that gained its independence from Mexico before becoming part of the United States. Texans also embrace their national identity as Americans as well.

¹³⁴"Southern Congressmen Issue Manifesto against Brown vs. Board Decision: Declaration of Constitutional Principles (1956)," In Kevin Sheets, ed. *Sources for America's History*, 8th edition (Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's Press, 2015), 675-76.

With the onset of the Cold War, this sense of pride and loyalty was reflected in the state's opposition to the spread of communism. The fear that communism posed a potential threat to the fabric of American life was perhaps more apparent in Texas than any other place in the union, especially considering its proximity to the Mexican border, which could facilitate the entry of communists into the state and nation. The strategy of containment for Texans meant it was on the front line of this potential battle. But the fear that communists had already infiltrated the country and plotted to destroy it from the inside was also evident. Thus, Texan pro-segregationists were adamant that the separation of races needed to continue because communists were behind the idea of integration. This separation would be aimed at both people of Mexican descent (regardless of nationality) and blacks. Mexican American attempts to desegregate were met with some success and they were able to break down the barriers keeping them in "their place." This was made possible within schools due to the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals case, *Mendez vs. Westminster*, 1947; however, in other places people of Mexican descent experienced discrimination similar to what blacks encountered under Jim Crow.

In West Texas communities like Spur and Snyder, Mexicans were prohibited from attending movie theaters and the local pharmacies. In one such instance, army veteran, Pedro Hernandez was denied a glass of water at the Spur pharmacy because of his ethnicity.¹³⁵ In Snyder, Mexicans were forbidden service at restaurants, and barber shops. And in one case, the town doctor refused to see the mother of another army veteran because it was his policy not to see "people of color."¹³⁶ Similar discriminatory practices existed in Pecos, Texas, as Mexicans

¹³⁵ "Ciudades De Texas Donde Se Humilla a Los Mexicanos." *Excelsior* (Mexico, D.F.), July 23, 1945.

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*

were barred from restaurants, hotels, and parks. Additionally, white customers were given priority non-segregated places like grocery stores.¹³⁷

Although Mexicans struggled to end discrimination in the state, the plight of Black Texans to end segregation met even stronger resistance. Segregation was a way of life in Texas during the Cold War and apparent in all facets of society, but it was in the field of education where anti-communists expressed their greatest concern. According to Cold Warriors, the schools were the most at risk, and communist elements needed to be prevented from infiltrating them. It was no secret that powerful state officials like Attorney General John Ben Sheppard believed that the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) was a communist organization in disguise. After all NAACP lawyer Thurgood Marshall had argued *Brown vs. Board*. So according to Sheppard, the NAACP intended to desegregate the schools for the purpose of allowing communism to infiltrate or even contaminate the school system. Sheppard was not alone in this belief. Texans used anti-communist rhetoric to justify their support for resisting the *Brown* ruling and even preyed upon people's fears that not just the schools were at stake, but also their entire way of life.

In addition to Sheppard, religious organizations also represented a significant force opposed to desegregation. One such group argued that NAACP was an acronym for the National Association for the Advancement of Communist Peoples. Whether these groups truly believed these notions cannot fully be determined, but they certainly took advantage of the fears in their contemporary society and disseminated literature condemning such groups. Thus civil rights groups and the issues they fought for were perceived as a Trojan horse that would allow communism to infiltrate traditional society and tear it down.

¹³⁷ Ibid.

Furthermore, states' rights advocates rejected the idea of increased federal aid to public schools at the end of the 1940s. They charged that it would lead to greater federal control over the states and ultimately cause communist-like control. In 1947, New York Congressman Ralph Gwinn commented in the congressional record that federal aid would create a condition where "no other God to which the people can turn except the Central State."¹³⁸ According to Gwinn, federal assistance would ultimately spill over into areas such as health care, shelter, and food, which he claimed were "the great centers of communism and foreign ideology."¹³⁹

When confronted with mandatory integration, Texas accused the federal government of violating the authority granted to it by the constitution. This opposition to U.S. actions began with President Harry Truman's 1948 executive order 9981, which desegregated the armed forces;¹⁴⁰ however, a lesser heralded incident that represented a strong white southern defiance of the federal government was the 1948 Supreme Court's decision in *Shelley vs. Kraemer*, which ruled that segregation within neighborhoods was a violation of the Fourteenth Amendment and thus dealt another blow to the long held institution. The case focused on an African American family in Missouri that moved into an all-white neighborhood with a private agreement that prevented blacks from owning property in the subdivision. A white family, the Kraemers sued a black family, the Shelleys to no avail; however, they appealed the ruling and the Missouri Supreme Court overturned the decision, stating that a "restrictive racial covenant" was constitutional. Restricted racial covenants was the terminology used to describe segregated neighborhoods. This decision appeared to be a victory for the pro-segregationists in the south, but the Shelley family eventually appealed the case to the U.S. Supreme Court. The ultimate

¹³⁸ Congressman Gwinn, speaking on *The Implications of Federal Aid to and Control of Education*, on July 26, 1947, 80th Cong., 1st sess., Congressional Record.

¹³⁹ Ibid.

¹⁴⁰ Exec. Order No. 9981, 3 C.F.R. 1 (1948).

decision stated that though there was no violation by the actual restrictions of the covenant, it was the state's obligation to enforce the Fourteenth Amendment and allow for the neighborhood to be integrated.¹⁴¹ Texas policy makers however had no plans to enforce anything that threatened their traditional way of life. White homeowners in San Antonio used the ruling to their advantage, attempting to keep out "Latin-Americans" from affluent communities such as Harlandale, Mayfield Park, and Terrell Wells."¹⁴² The Homeowners' Protective League held a meeting to organize the people in those neighborhoods in order to "prevent the sale of property to Latin-Americans in restricted areas."¹⁴³ Alonso Perales and League United Latin American Citizens (LULAC) presented an unsuccessful anti-discrimination bill to the state legislature in 1945 in an effort to protect people of Mexican descent from such actions. Perales revisited the issue in 1950 when he pleaded with Texas Governor Allan Shivers to pass a law that would prohibit "discrimination against persons of Mexican descent in public commercial establishments, such as restaurants and theaters, merely because of their racial extraction."¹⁴⁴

Although *Shelley v. Kraemer* provided a somewhat favorable outcome (it still implied that states had an obligation to enforce the Fourteenth Amendment), conservative Texans resented the Supreme Court's decisions viewing them as a violation of their individual and state rights. According to them, the federal government had exceeded its authority and infringed upon their rights. This perception only added to the fears that the traditional segregated way of life was being threatened.

Texas officials argued the constitution never addressed the issue of segregation or education. Thus the federal government had no power over the issue and had no right to undo

¹⁴¹ *Shelley vs. Kraemer* (May 3, 1948).

¹⁴² "South Side Not to Sell Land to Latin-Americans." *San Antonio Evening News*, August 27, 1949.

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁴ Alonso Perales to Allan Shivers. December 20, 1950. Austin, Texas.

what was institutionalized in Texas. In another address to Congress in 1949, Congressman Gwinn insisted that the recent actions of the federal government indicated a shift in the entity's philosophy. According to Gwinn the growth of federal power was occurring at the expense of the states and the individual. Gwinn argued that increasing federal aid to public schools would lead to a "national indoctrination," of all children in the country¹⁴⁵ and was moving the nation toward "socialization."¹⁴⁶ To support his claims, Gwinn referred to increased expenditures in education in New York and California. While both spent more on education, Gwinn said that there were so-called "dreamers" in both states that demanded even more spending in the field. Furthermore, in an effort to highlight increased government spending's detriment, he alleged that the number of communists in those two states was also increasing.¹⁴⁷ Gwinn never provides any statistical proof of his accusations, yet his sentiments were popular in the lone star state.

In looking at Gwinn's argument, one can understand his appeal to pro-segregationists. The unraveling of the Jim Crow segregation laws occurred because of influences within the federal government that did not exist before the Cold War. When looking at the issue of segregation through a Cold War lens, one can see that extreme conservative groups in the South interpreted mandatory desegregation as a means of allowing communist elements to infiltrate the country and contaminate the Constitution. The ninth and tenth amendments were deemed to be under the greatest risk of subversive forces. In the view of the radical Right, communists had broken domestic measures of containment by influencing the passage of civil rights legislation and Supreme Court decisions.

¹⁴⁵ Congressman Gwinn, *Extension of Remarks*, on January 13, 1949, 81st Cong., 1st sess., Congressional Record.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid.

The notion of “restrictive racial covenants,” which the case undid, only intensified with the Supreme Court’s 1954 decision in *Brown vs. Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas*, which would mean black and white children would inevitably be placed side by side in schools. According to southern leaders, by ruling in this case, the Supreme Court had dismissed the ninth (which protects individuals from excessive government power) and tenth amendments of the Constitution. They would have the same view of the 1964 Civil Rights Act and the Voting Rights of the following year.

Both the ninth and tenth amendments were designed to protect the individual rights of Americans from excessive government power.¹⁴⁸ According to “For America”, a political action group, “internationalist leadership [had] captured both parties.”¹⁴⁹ The group believed a new set of candidates needed to be courted to curtail further federal intervention in regional affairs and “abolish Socialistic Bureaucracy.”¹⁵⁰ “For America” demanded the passage of an amendment that would prevent future “Court decisions of Executive Agreement or Treaty” from overriding the Constitution.¹⁵¹ These demands stemmed from the beliefs that the ninth and tenth amendments had been compromised by recent court decisions. The group believed that public education “legally [fell] under state and local governments and [was] not a subsidy of the federal government.”¹⁵² Similar to groups like the John Birch Society, political leaders believed the imposing of laws upon the states was an indication that communist forces had infiltrated into the

¹⁴⁸ The enumeration in the Constitution, of certain rights, shall not be construed to deny or disparage others retained by the people.” The argument of pro-segregationists in Texas as well as the rest of the South was that this amendment afforded the people the personal/individual right to choose not to integrate. This was a reference to individual rights guaranteed by the Constitution. The tenth amendment states: “The powers not delegated to the United States by the Constitution, nor prohibited by it to the States, are reserved to the States respectively, or to the people.”

¹⁴⁹ *For America: A Committee for Political Action* (Washington D.C., For America, 1956).

¹⁵⁰ Ibid.

¹⁵¹ Ibid.

¹⁵² Ibid.

federal government. An editorial in the *Fort Worth Star Telegram*, linked communism to the perceived increase in the centralization of the federal government, “It has been claimed that the Communists have been against states’ rights, but whether true or not, it is obvious that the trend to centralization of authority in a national government is a step toward the system which lends itself to territory.”¹⁵³ The article also implied that it was clear that a “fundamental change” was taking place in the governing body in the “guise of protecting the rights of certain groups.”¹⁵⁴ Those certain groups were people of color, particularly African Americans and the statement in general was a reference to civil rights activism. To the extreme Right, the civil rights movement was a communist front.

It is unclear if conservative southern leaders truly believed that civil rights legislation and pro-civil rights Supreme Court decisions were actual signs of communist infiltration into the federal government or if they only sought political gain by posing as defenders of the Constitution. Regardless of the intentions, linking civil rights to communism was an easy selling point to concerned people living in the South. It was convenient to draw upon the fears of the southern populace and argue that the changes taking place in society were a legitimate threat to their way of life. Thus, the connection between the two elements was utilized throughout the Cold War era. For example, Supreme Court Justice William O. Douglas became a target of the conspiracy theorists. It was revealed in December 1955 that Douglas visited the Soviet Union. While nothing else of substance ever came of the visit, the fact that he did travel there was enough to impose suspicion upon his motives. It was not long after the *Brown vs. Board* ruling that this information leaked and thus a connection between communism and the Supreme Court

¹⁵³ “States’ Rights Cause Rest on Reason,” *Fort Worth Star Telegram* (Fort Worth, Texas), May 15, 1956.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid.

could be implied.¹⁵⁵ According to Dean Clarence Manion, Douglas's visit to the Soviet Union was an obvious sign that he was under Soviet control. Regarding the communists' process towards gaining control, Manion stated: "First comes the police; next education; then public health; next agriculture; then finance; and finally the courts."¹⁵⁶ In interpreting his comment, the police and education system can be seen as having been desegregated. In both cases, the federal government intervened to assure that this process would take place; however, Manion's claim that the courts were the last institution that the Communists sought to control was meant to instill fear that communism had indeed completed their ascendancy to power. The denouncing of Brown vs. Board and the alleged link between Douglas and the Soviet Union was done to add legitimacy to conspiracy theories involving communist control of the federal government.

Texan leaders echoed much of the national pundits' take on this issue. It was no wonder that the threat of resistance to desegregation was as strong. Texas Attorney General John Ben Sheppard warned that federally mandated desegregation would "arouse resentment, individual discrimination and, as experience has demonstrated in other states, violence."¹⁵⁷ Sheppard's comments on the issue were not exclusive to Texas either. In Hobbs, New Mexico, a town on the border with West Texas, Reverend William (Bill) Carter pleaded with the governor of New Mexico to follow suit with the Lone Star State and impose martial law in the community and prevent the desegregation order from being carried out. Though not part of Texas, Hobbs is located closer to West Texas metropolitan areas such as Lubbock and Midland/Odessa than it is to its own state's capital, Santa Fe. The political mindset towards desegregation in Hobbs was closely associated to those shared in the Lone Star State. Carter even suggested that the handling

¹⁵⁵ Clarence E. Manion, "Federal Aid is Counterfeit Money," *Manion Forum of Opinion* (South Bend, In.), Dec. 11, 1955.

¹⁵⁶ Ibid.

¹⁵⁷ "Texas Warns on Desegregation," *El Paso Herald Post* (El Paso, Texas), November 15, 1954.

of the matter by Washington was “communistic in the way it was handled.”¹⁵⁸ As head of the local Segregation Committee, Carter warned that desegregation would lead to rioting hence the reason why he called for police intervention. Carter, a Baptist, accused the Methodist Church, which supported the desegregation mandate, of being a communist-affiliated organization. He claimed to have proof that Methodist Churches were “endorsing communism.”¹⁵⁹ Furthermore, Reverend Carter vowed that his children would not go to an integrated school and the government’s attempt to force that upon the white community was similar to the stories of people “held behind the Iron Curtain.”¹⁶⁰

But even in West Texas there were cities that opted to desegregate almost immediately after the Supreme Court’s ruling on *Brown vs. Board*. Big Spring was one such community that integrated the elementary schools by the fall of 1954; however, this decision came with consequences. Surrounding Texas communities criticized and applied economic pressure on Big Spring for this action. Cities such as Midland and Odessa warned that integration at the secondary levels could result in boycotts of sports competitions with the city. Interestingly enough, this same threat was made and carried out against Hobbs by towns in West Texas. For example, Andrews, Texas cancelled its football game with Hobbs on October 1, 1954, because the New Mexico school had two black players on the team.¹⁶¹ Kermit threatened to do the same but eventually allowed the game to be played, though the crowds could not be mixed.¹⁶²

¹⁵⁸ “Group Fighting Desegregation Fears Violence: Pastor Leads Move to Call in Militia,” *El Paso Herald-Post*, (El Paso, Texas), August 27, 1954.

¹⁵⁹ Ibid.

¹⁶⁰ Ibid.

¹⁶¹ “Hobbs vs. Kermit,” Newspaper Clippings, John Ben Sheppard Papers, University of Texas of the Permian Basin, Odessa, Texas.

¹⁶² Ibid.

The pressure applied to Big Spring for its integration was more serious though as the town's location was near West Texas cities such as Midland/Odessa, Lubbock, and Abilene. Although those four cities were not the size of places like Houston or Dallas, they were the major population centers in West Texas.¹⁶³ If one were to draw lines connecting these places to each other, Big Spring would represent the epicenter of that region. Additionally, Big Spring was a city that one would need to drive through in order to get from Dallas to El Paso (two larger cities) which was a route of heavy traffic.

Pressure was applied to the town by state and regional leaders. An injunction was proposed to withhold state money to the community because of its decision to integrate. Although a district court and eventually the state Supreme Court struck the motion, it was clear that surrounding areas wanted to eliminate integration within Big Spring and even squeeze the city economically to force it to reverse its decision. Even elected officials spoke out against the issue.¹⁶⁴ Attorney General Sheppard, who spoke on behalf of the Texas Citizens' Council, claimed that the Supreme Court did not pass a decision on schools in the state. Governor Allan Shivers also stated that Texas schools were not obligated to undergo "immediate desegregation."¹⁶⁵

Similar to Big Spring, nearby San Angelo, represented another example in which desegregation occurred much earlier than other parts of the state. While most school districts in Texas chose to delay integration as long as possible, San Angelo held emergency school board meetings in 1955 that leaders from both races attended. Community leaders opted to desegregate

¹⁶³ The layout of West Texas is such that population density is much lower than that of East Texas. None of these cities are the size of the places such as Austin; however, they are the largest cities in the western part of the state sans El Paso.

¹⁶⁴ "Texas State School Bans Found Unlawful," *The Crusader*, (Waco, Texas), October 21, 1955.

¹⁶⁵ Ibid.

soon after the *Brown vs. Board* decision.¹⁶⁶ But like the experience of Big Spring, the Commissioner of Education, J.W. Edgar, warned the school board that it could lose financial funding if it did not get in line with the majority of school districts that intended to defy the Supreme Court ruling. In addition, Edgar informed board members that the “worst case scenario” would be a state court order to re-segregate.¹⁶⁷ The warning turned out to be a veiled threat but the message was clear: the Texas government wanted to show solidarity and defiance against the federal government’s infiltration into the state’s schools.

Big Spring and San Angelo were exceptions to the norm though as the majority of Texas communities defied desegregation efforts. Condemning the courts’ decision on the matter was not all that Texas leaders did to resist desegregation. The NAACP was the primary organization involved in fighting institutionalized segregation before and after *Brown vs. Board*. While it was not the only group involved, it was the main target for extreme Right elements in resisting the changes. Perhaps because of its attachment to that case, the Right levied most of its attacks on it. And because of its link to civil rights activism, the NAACP was labeled either communist or sympathetic to communism. One accusation stated the group was able to employ “Communist propaganda” creating a myth of “American discrimination against minority groups.”¹⁶⁸ By 1955, state elected leaders pursued legislation targeting the NAACP as a means of containing the group and limiting it from expanding its influence.

Religious and political leaders (sometimes one in the same) actively distributed literature attacking the NAACP as well as the notion of desegregation. In this case, Texans drew from

¹⁶⁶ Gregory A. Doherty, "The Beginnings of Integration in San Angelo I.S.D.," in *Slavery to Integration: Black Americans in West Texas*, ed. Bruce A. Glasrud and Paul Carlson (Abilene, Texas: State House Press, 2007), 132.

¹⁶⁷ Ibid, 136.

¹⁶⁸ “Gradual Integration of Pupils Suggested,” Clippings from the John Ben Sheppard Collections, University of Texas of the Permian Basin, Odessa, Texas.

other agents in the South that shared their pro-segregationist views. For example, John Ben Sheppard as the Attorney General held in his possession several pamphlets sent to him by elected officials and ultra-conservative groups from other states. One reference that Sheppard used in his speeches on the issue was Reverend G.T. Gillespie's public address before the Synod of Mississippi of the Presbyterian Church in November 1954. Titled, "A Christian View on Segregation," Gillespie claimed the issue of integration was worsened by communist ideology because of its attempt to undo "all national and racial distinctions and to affect the complete amalgamation of all races."¹⁶⁹ The reverend argued that the race problem stemmed not from institutionalized segregation, or from "pure-blood negroes," but rather from "negroes of mixed blood" that were disgruntled with their economic and social status in northern communities.¹⁷⁰ Furthermore, the other "violent agitation against segregation," came from forces outside the country that were part of a worldwide communist ploy.¹⁷¹ Gillespie's warnings exploited the fear of intermingling between black and white races. Throughout his address, he invoked the terms such as amalgamation, hybrid, and mulatto race, implying the result of intermingling and intermarriages was strictly negative. In cold war context, the reverend's message warned that the races needed to keep to themselves as a means of self-containment and prevent outside negative influences which classified as intermingling from creating a weaker race. Additionally the mingling of the races would also lead to the breakup of the traditional home and family. The reverend claimed, "Whether the differences be moral, cultural or physical, is not conducive to

¹⁶⁹ G.T. Gillespie, D.D. "A Christian View on Segregation." Made Before The Synod of Mississippi of the Presbyterian Church in the U.S., Jackson. 4 Nov. 1954. Address.

¹⁷⁰ Ibid.

¹⁷¹ Ibid.

the preservation of wholesome family life or to morality, and therefore is contrary to the purpose and will of God.”¹⁷²

Gillespie’s address to the Presbyterian Church was eventually printed and distributed throughout Texas as well as the entirety of the South. Shepherd had his copy, but other church leaders also embraced the reverend’s message and expressed their concern about the matter to him. Roy Carr from Borger, Texas categorized the NAACP as an organization wanting to implement negative changes to society. In a letter to Sheppard, Carr stated that it was “very clear [the NAACP] was a subversive organization, “that needed to be investigated.”¹⁷³ Vice Chairman of the Dallas Chapter of the Texas Citizens’ Council and Pastor Carey Daniel also wrote to Sheppard pleading with him to prevent further federal intervention in the state as well as that of civil rights’ groups. Daniel referred to the NAACP by a name that became popular in pro-segregationist and radical Right circles throughout the 1950s. Dubbing the group, the National Association for the Advancement of the Communist Party, the Dallas pastor endorsed much of the sentiments shared by Gillespie. Daniel alleged the NAACP was a “Communist-dominated outfit,” that consisted of several members that were suspected of “un-American activities,” a phrase that was popular at that time because of the Red Scare.¹⁷⁴ In addition, Daniel urged the Attorney General to remain steadfast against public school desegregation and support for American withdrawal from the United Nations. Daniel believed that both actions were necessary to “save our country and our constitution from the Communists.”¹⁷⁵

¹⁷² Ibid.

¹⁷³ Roy, Carr, Letter to John Ben Shepard. 7 Sept. 1955. MS. Borger, Texas.

¹⁷⁴ Carey Daniel, Letter to John Ben Sheppard. 20 Jan. 1956. MS. First Baptist Church of West Dallas, Dallas, Texas.

¹⁷⁵ Ibid.

The concern from these religious figures and their vehement insistence that the NAACP was a communist organization can be traced back to the supposed proof revealed by the Attorney General of Georgia, Eugene Cook. In an article entitled, "The Ugly Truth about the NAACP," Cook dismissed the race issue behind segregation and instead implied that the NAACP was merely a front for communists to infiltrate into the country. Cook accused leaders of the group such as W.E.B. DuBois of being communists. His claims stemmed from the House Committee on Un-American Activities (HUAC) report on DuBois and the Black leader's defense of suspected communists, Julius and Ethel Rosenberg.¹⁷⁶ The Attorney General claimed that, "South-hating white people with long records of affinity for, affiliation with, and participation in Communist, Communist front, fellow traveling and subversive organizations, activities and causes have directed and subsidized the NAACP."¹⁷⁷

According to Cook, the NAACP was a serious threat to "peace, tranquility, government and way of life of" the people of Georgia and he intended to report his findings to the General Assembly of representatives in his state.¹⁷⁸ None of Cook's so-called evidence was ever found to be substantial enough to incriminate anyone on these charges, and the NAACP challenged him with his supporters to show proof of their communist ties;¹⁷⁹ however, like extreme right-wing groups, Cook sensationalized the communist threat to the country. His warnings of the threat to peace and way of life to Southerners was a means of getting the attention of the populace, most of which had no stake in the segregation matter one way or the other. Nevertheless, Cook's manifesto rallied leaders throughout the South and indeed influenced officials in Texas.

¹⁷⁶ Eugene Cook, "The Ugly Truth about the NAACP." Address, 55th Annual Convention of the Peace Officers Association of Georgia, Atlanta, January 1955.

¹⁷⁷ Ibid.

¹⁷⁸ Ibid.

¹⁷⁹ "Texas NAACP Tells Texas Councils to Prove Their Communism Charges." *Arkansas State Press* (Little Rock, Arkansas), November 25, 1955, Volume 15 ed., Number 30 sec.

Another target of redbaiting in the South was the Urban League. Based in St. Louis, Missouri, the Urban League was associated with the more nationally known NAACP and both were deemed to be communist organizations. The St. Louis Tavern Operator's Association, a local conservative group, distributed literature that warned of a bleak future for white southerners that opposed integration. One pamphlet warned that desegregation would lead to interracial marriages and the eventual elimination of the white race. The pamphlet contained a series of pictures that chronologically depicted how this deconstruction would occur.

Its purpose was to show how a race (in this case, the white race) would potentially get corrupted through mixing and the blame for this began with a seemingly apathetic attitude by whites over the idea of desegregation. It argued that by not caring about this issue, black and white children ultimately would go to school together but then it would lead to relationships between white and black students. The brochure depicted a black male with a white female, which was most likely done to pry on fears of white males at the time as well. The moral of the brochure was that mixing of the races would corrupt both the white and "negro" races. It also concluded by showing that there was a villain behind the scheme of integration. The NAACP was presented as a stereotypical enemy, and was shown to be mixing "lies" into a melting pot that showed all of the negative comments attached to pro-segregationists of the time. Once again, the NAACP was portrayed as the villain setting all of these changes in motion. The last section of the tract included text with the following warning, "Our enemies are behind the move. They have been undermining us for the last 30 or 40 years. We are so divided, that if a war started tomorrow, God only knows where we would land. For God's sake American people - wake up, before it is too late. Our enemy is organized - but we are not."¹⁸⁰ The idea of mixing

¹⁸⁰ William H. Flori, *Wake Up*. St. Louis: St. Louis Tavern Operator's Association, 1956.

the races in any facet of society was unacceptable. When looking at the literature that circulated during the 1950s, one can see a concerted effort to raise awareness of the dangers involved with interaction between the races and how it would potentially derail the country.

The NAACP was the convenient villain of pro-segregationist elements and even if the federal government mandated integration, groups still fought it and implemented a form of de facto segregation. For example, in Texas state representatives rushed to create bills that either maintained or delayed segregation. In other cases, it facilitated white flight. Representative Virginia Duff of Ferris, Texas, proposed a bill permitting school boards “the last word in deciding on transfer or assignment of students.”¹⁸¹ Abe Mays of Atlanta, Texas proposed House Bill 235, which sought to provide scholarships for students to attend private schools. These grants were specifically designated for students looking to opt out of attending an integrated public school.¹⁸² Additionally, Reagan Huffman proposed House Bill 237, which allowed for students to transfer out of schools if they chose not to attend integrated districts.¹⁸³ The efforts by Texas representatives were clear. They intended to preserve segregation through the creation of state laws. Public schools were federally funded and thus subject to desegregation orders; however, private schools could keep segregation in place based on economic status, since only wealthy families could afford to send their children to such institutions.

In addition to the transfer bills being passed, state representatives also moved to minimize the influence of the NAACP in the state. The most egregious of these efforts was House Bill 239. Also proposed by Reagan Huffman, this bill intended to “promote racial harmony and

¹⁸¹ "House Group OKs Segregation Bills." In John Ben Sheppard Collections at the University of Texas of the Permian Basin, compiled by John Ben Sheppard. Texas: Odessa, 1956.

¹⁸² H.R. State Affairs HB 235, 55 Cong., 12 (1957) (enacted).

¹⁸³ H.R. Res. State Affairs, HB 237, 55 Cong., 7 (1957) (enacted).

tranquility,” in the state.¹⁸⁴ Though Huffman portrayed the bill as one with good intentions for all Texans, white and black, it intended to do so by requiring the registration of any person or organization that was “advocating racial integration,” because these agents “[tended] to cause racial conflicts or violence.”¹⁸⁵ The obvious target of this bill was the NAACP. Huffman even suggested as part of the bill that anyone affiliated with the organization be blacklisted from employment at schools or any position relating to education in the state. In addition, the bill also required integrationist groups like the NAACP to report to the Texas Secretary of State from when and where they were getting contributions.¹⁸⁶ The purpose behind these required reports was to monitor these organizations out of suspicion that they were receiving funds from communist-affiliated people or groups. Further, whatever groups that were revealed would then also be subject to scrutiny by Texas officials. But despite the suspicions and accusations against the NAACP, extremists could never find proof of a communist conspiracy within the group. The Texas chapter challenged the attacks at a convention in Dallas, asking for its detractors to present evidence of any nefarious or subversive activities, declaring: “We stand ready to be investigated.”¹⁸⁷

Even though no credible information was ever found tying the NAACP to some grand communist conspiracy, it did not stop pro-segregation groups from fighting integration and insisting that their opponents in the debate were communists. Segregation would not be completely undone in the south even a full decade after *Brown vs. Board*. The primary reason for this was because of state governments and judges issuing legislation or decisions that were meant to delay the inevitable. In September of 1965, U.S. District Judge F.M. Scarlet of Georgia

¹⁸⁴ H.R. Res. State Affairs HB 239, 55 Cong., 19 (1957) (enacted).

¹⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁸⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁸⁷ “Texas NAACP Tells Texas Councils to Prove Their Communism Charges,” *Arkansas State Press*.

declared that school districts in the state could no longer discriminate based on color or race. The ruling sounded pro-integration; however, its real intent was to address other ways to resist desegregation. In this case it presented the idea of percentages of black students being allowed in white schools. The major way in which Scarlet tried to enforce this was through forbidding “bussing” laws aimed at putting students of both races in the same school. By showing this, black students who predominantly lived in different neighborhoods than whites would be contained in these areas and forced to go to school nearby. Because white students were segregated based on neighborhoods, this meant segregation in the schools would continue.¹⁸⁸

In addition, the literature opposing integration evolved into a different narrative. In the summer of 1963, the *Dallas Morning News* released an editorial entitled, “Civil Rights.” The editorial attacked the strategy that liberal activists utilized to justify a civil rights bill. In it, President Kennedy was charged with doing “permanent damage to the fabric of a free society,” in order to get civil rights legislation passed.¹⁸⁹ Though the writers of the column acknowledged a “race problem” existed in the country, it was not something that needed to be addressed via federal government intervention. The Civil Rights bill proposed to end discrimination, segregation, and promote racial equality in society; however, opponents argued it was an “assault on private property.”¹⁹⁰ Moreover, they criticized the President for proposing to “forbid virtually every businessman in America from discriminating in his private establishment.”¹⁹¹ This meant business owners would be forced to denounce segregationist beliefs, allow nonwhite customers into their businesses, and show fairness in hiring people of color to work as well. The idea of

¹⁸⁸ Lawrence, David. "Discrimination against Whites." *Big Spring Herald* (Big Spring, Texas), September 13, 1965.

¹⁸⁹ *Dallas Morning News* (Dallas, Texas). "Civil Rights." Editorial. June 21, 1963.

¹⁹⁰ Ibid.

¹⁹¹ Ibid.

private property being placed at risk was an inference to communism's major tenet, the abolition of private property. Though the word "communism" was never mentioned, the editorial implied its presence with its reference to private property and also that Kennedy's backed civil rights bill represented "big government getting bigger."¹⁹²

Another column titled, "What's Wrong with Civil Rights?" was published in the Belmont-based (home of the John Birch Society headquarters) *American Opinion*. This article was more aggressive in attacking the proposed legislation and labeling it as part of a communist conspiracy. Like the Dallas-based article, it also admitted to the existence of a race problem, stating that "there [were] injustices to our Negro citizens still prevalent in some places and they should be eliminated."¹⁹³ Yet the article implied the civil rights threatened basic individual freedoms by allowing the federal government to grow in power. The bill was part of an elaborate communist scheme to defeat American democracy from within as opposed to the more traditional beliefs of an outside attack. According to the article, the civil rights movement, including the protests and "riots" which it caused, was "almost wholly created by the Communists."¹⁹⁴ Furthermore, it was part of a strategy that Communists had been working on for the past forty years.¹⁹⁵ To deflect from the race issue, which was the intention of the bill, the editorial suggested that the civil rights movement was not endorsed nor asked for by the overwhelming majority of the black population, but rather they were "duped" along with segments of the white population by communist propaganda. In addition, the final plea of the article was for both black and white people to unite and spread awareness of the supposed

¹⁹² Ibid.

¹⁹³ "What's Wrong with Civil Rights?" *American Opinion*, September 1963.

¹⁹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁹⁵ Ibid.

communist plot in order to defeat it.¹⁹⁶ This was yet another effort to contain the idea of civil rights and desegregation by creating a narrative that the leaders of the movement were foreign and promoting un-American ideals. Further, both races needed to stand together to prevent communist-influenced desegregation ideas from infiltrating into their society.

Radical Right leaders utilized several strategies to vilify the integration of races and generally associated communism with the move. Still, the Civil Rights Act of 1964 passed, but with consequences. The Democratic Party lost its political support from southern states and the bill's passage did not mean Southern states' instant cooperation with the law. Moreover, right-wing leaders continued to attack the civil rights movement and its leaders, which only added to the outrage of pro-segregationists. Bircher J. Evetts Haley not only targeted the usual suspect, the NAACP, but also the Congress of Racial Equality, the Urban League, and the "darling of the Communists," Martin Luther King Jr. for their influence on President Lyndon B. Johnson on the issue.¹⁹⁷ This accusation not only made anti-integrationists oppose civil rights leaders even more, but it also caused anger towards Johnson, a southern Democrat—a Texan-- and someone that they did not expect to support such an issue. According to Haley, the civil rights bill "would assuredly destroy what was left of the civil rights of all as well as the American Constitutional System."¹⁹⁸ Johnson's support of social integration was the equivalent to an act of treason in the eyes of traditional and radical conservatives. Because Johnson was a native Texan and supportive of civil rights legislation which meant more federal government as well, only

¹⁹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁹⁷ J. Evetts Haley, *A Texan Looks at Lyndon: A Study of Illegitimate Power* (Canyon, Texas: Palo Duro Press, 1964), 217.

¹⁹⁸ Ibid, 218.

heightened the fears of the conspiracy theorists that believed communism was behind all of these charges. To them Johnson was “determined to destroy [their] once cherished way of life.”¹⁹⁹

The determined opposition against integration even after the passage of civil rights legislation paid off to an extent. By the close of the 1960s, public education was still yet to be fully integrated, despite the Brown vs. Board decision having been passed back in 1954. Lubbock for example maintained predominantly segregated schools based on residential locations of the two races. The U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare (HEW), with the assistance of federal courts, finally got the school system to redraw the district boundaries in 1970.²⁰⁰ Local opponents saw the move as yet another example of big government infiltrating their society and forcing a change to their way of life.

In far west Texas, the NAACP fought until the end of the 1960s to get theaters integrated, despite the Civil Rights Act’s passage in 1964. In addition, action by the neighboring communities of Clint and Fabens, added confusion to desegregation. In 1966, Jim Britton, a member of the Clint school board, commented that the community would integrate if nearby Fabens closed its school down or outright denied black students admission. Conversely, if Fabens desegregated, then Clint would send its black students over there.²⁰¹ It is unclear why both schools did not both desegregate at the same time but the ambiguity of their message made it inconvenient for black families living in those districts.

In Ector County, located in Odessa, the first attempts at desegregation resulted in massive white flight from Ector High School in Odessa by 1968.²⁰² And despite HEW’s charging that

¹⁹⁹ Ibid, 227.

²⁰⁰ Robert L. Foster and Alwyn Barr, "Black Lubbock," in *Slavery to Integration: Black Americans in West Texas*, ed. Bruce A. Glasrud and Paul H. Carlson (Abilene, Texas: State House Press, 2007), 114.

²⁰¹ "Negroes Seek Desegregation in E.P. Theaters," *El Paso Herald Post* (El Paso, Texas), August 17, 1966.

²⁰² Bryan L. Smith, "Desegregation in West Texas: The United States vs. Ector County I.S.D. Case," in *Slavery to Integration*, ed. Bruce A. Glasrud and Paul Carlson (Abilene, Texas: State House Press, 2007), 141.

Ector County was not compliant with the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the board insisted that its school was in fact integrated. In reality, sixty-two percent of the student body was Hispanic, a group that the federal government classified as white.²⁰³ Ector County however, saw the classification as a convenient buffer to separate the races. Ultimately, HEW and the federal courts pressured the redistricting in Ector County that brought about full-scale integration, but this civil rights victory did not occur until 1982.

Desegregation was fought in the West Texas communities of Lubbock, Odessa, Clint, and Fabens and when the federal government issued civil rights legislation, white flight occurred in which white families looked to hold onto traditional segregationist beliefs. The white population that withdrew from integrated schools to enroll at predominantly segregated schools did so in order to seek a safe haven from perceived negative influences.

The civil rights movement was not the only reason that caused fear among the conservative white population. In its eyes, the rise of Fidel Castro and a communist regime so close to the United States, as well as the escalated involvement in Vietnam, were not coincidences given that they occurred at the same time of so many civil rights demonstrations at home. To these individuals, America had lost Cuba and the missile crisis of 1962 only confirmed their worst fears that a communist state could attack the country with such destructive weapons. Driving out communists from the island nation and preventing it from gaining a foothold anywhere else in the hemisphere should have been a priority of containment policy. Preventing the spread of communism into South Vietnam and the rest of Southeast Asia should have also been a priority. Instead, in their eyes the country was preoccupied with the passage of

²⁰³ Ibid, 142.

civil rights legislation and undoing voter suppression, which were issues the Right believed were unnecessary and even detrimental to American society.

From the Right's perspective, for so many people to be active in demonstrations fighting for these rights meant that they only served to enhance the idea of communism in the country or even more alarming, were actual agents promoting the ideology. Opponents charged that such demonstrations were even illegal and not subject to first amendment protection. Former U.S. Supreme Court member, Charles Whittaker denounced protests such as the sit-ins as a form of criminal trespassing, which federal leaders should have punished but instead felt "compelled" to reward.²⁰⁴ Whittaker deemed civil rights activism as being lawless and ironically argued that grievances for which they fought for should be addressed in the courts, an institution so vilified by the Right throughout the decade.²⁰⁵ Whittaker was not the only one linking civil rights demonstrations to communist plots. Doctor Geo Benson, President of the Arkansas-based National Education Program also suggested in the organization's newsletter that a U.S. Senate sub-committee had evidence of the ties. Benson noted several black leaders had connections to communist groups or were anti-American. For example, Robert Williams a native southerner, described as a "renegade negro," had fled to Cuba and was broadcasting to the U.S. from the island.²⁰⁶ These broadcasts according to the National Education Program "openly [called] upon American Negroes to engage in force and violence against the American government."²⁰⁷ Benson believed communist strategy in the U.S. sought to foment unrest within the black population, which could be done under the guise of civil rights organization. Benson's warning focused on

²⁰⁴ Charles E. Whittaker, "Planned Lawlessness Threatens to Get Out of Hand: A Warning from a Noted Jurist," *U.S. News & World Report*, September 19, 1966, 38.

²⁰⁵ *Ibid*, 43.

²⁰⁶ Geo S. Benson, "Reds at Work: Rioting," *The National Program Letter*, November 1966, 3.

²⁰⁷ *Ibid*, 4.

protests in northern cities and he referred to national figures such as Stokeley Carmichael in the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee, Martin Luther King Jr.'s efforts in Chicago, and the NAACP convention in New York's call for racial equality. It was as if to say that the communist-inspired events had broken through in northern cities and it was only a matter of time before such incidents would spill over into southern communities. Benson pleaded with officials throughout the south to heed the warnings of former Justice Whittaker as well as his own, that the "Red's primary goal in America" was the "breakdown of laws and anarchy," which they believed the civil rights movement really represented.²⁰⁸ One official to take the newsletter seriously was the John Birch Society in Texas. Bircher J. Evetts Haley disseminated the literature at a group meeting in Canyon, Texas. Furthermore, literature like this only fueled defiance within people that were already opposed to the civil rights movement of the 1960s.

From the integration of the armed forces and U.S. Supreme Court ruling on racial restrictive covenants in 1948 and the Brown vs. Board decision in 1954, desegregation occurred in the country at a slow pace. That pace was even slower in the south, particularly in communities in the Western part of the state. The Texas legislature responded to the high court with laws aimed at curtailing federal integration efforts. Moreover, the use of the Cold War rhetoric in light of international events only enhanced their views on this issue. The passage of the Civil Rights Act and Voting Rights in 1964 and 1965 were not enough to desegregate the state in its entirety. While communities like Big Spring, San Angelo, and even New Mexico's Hobbs (which borders West Texas) opted to desegregate public schools soon after the Brown vs. Board decision, they were in the minority in Texas. And they were ostracized for doing so. Other communities would hold out much longer.

²⁰⁸ Ibid.

By the 1970s, the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare had called for mandatory bussing in several communities throughout the South to enforce desegregation. This only added to the containment narrative among pro-segregationists. They did not want their children leaving the safety of nearby schools to go across town and its unfamiliar and perceived unsafe areas. Conversely, there was also concern of unfamiliar and different students from other parts of town coming into their neighborhood schools. The preference was to contain and confine their children within proximity to their homes while keeping out those from other neighborhoods. Because the black and white populations lived in segregated neighborhoods, bussing laws threatened to break containment. Communities like Midland and Odessa, Texas upheld segregation in their schools long after the passage of civil rights legislation. In the case of Odessa, it was not until 1982 before segregation was finally undone, making it the last community in the country to do so.

Chapter 5: Labor in Texas during the Cold War: “Right to Work,” Not Organize

Of all the Cold War issues, labor was the obvious one that attracted attention from anti-communists within the government and private sector. The working class was the focus of power in a communist society. Labor organizing was of particular concern, because of the fear that communist elements in unions would push their ideological agenda. What transpired in the first half of the Cold War (1945-1965) was a series of federal laws designed to restrict organized labor or at the very least deter union organizing from taking place. Because of the belief that communists were constantly plotting to infiltrate the United States, the issue of labor in many ways went hand and hand with immigration; however, that issue will be discussed in another chapter.

Yet, it is important to note that immigration legislation was often passed as a means of persecuting alleged foreign labor organizers and/or communist sympathizers. Texas had a large ethnic Mexican (American and Mexican citizens) population where immigration (legal and illegal) was common. Though representing a significant percentage of the population, Mexicans faced discrimination in the workforce and more generally from civil society. This chapter will cover conservative Texans’ reactions to organized labor and will show cases in which race represented a divisive factor. Mexican and black labor activists argued that whites were paid more money than them for performing the same jobs. Any resistance to this practice could result in deportation or arrests that violated their civil rights.

In order to combat unfair labor treatment, Mexicans organized in the workforce to demand better working conditions and pay. To the dominant class, such demands smacked of communism. Illegal immigration ignited another fear that emerged out of the combination of the

Red Scare hysteria and outright racism. The white population, led by the region's power brokers, countered the influx of immigrants and labor organizing by alleging that communists were spreading their beliefs in the area. More generally, they believed that communism was also infiltrating into the United States from Mexico. But anyone that attempted to organize regardless of race experienced strong opposition from the anti-communist elements in the state's government and business sector. .

This was not the case prior to the Second World War. Organized labor gained significant victories in the 1930s amidst the Great Depression. The National Labor Relations Act of 1935 (Wagner Act) allowed workers the right to form labor unions. It also protected union members from unfair labor practices and discrimination from employers.²⁰⁹ In addition, the Fair Labor and Standards Act of 1938 established a minimum wage, a maximum hour workweek, and abolished child labor.²¹⁰ These were all goals that labor organizations had fought to achieve since the Gilded Age. Even the Social Security Act which was also passed in 1935 like the Wagner Act, was beneficial to labor because it helped keep the elderly out of the workforce and minimized competition over jobs. It also guaranteed workers a pension, albeit a modest one, upon retirement.

Texas was at a crux so to speak as it entered into the Second World War. On one hand, the state was a conservative stronghold that fell in line with the rest of the South. The Democratic Party controlled Texas; however, the party was evolving just like in the rest of the country. This transformation had begun during Great Depression was the main reason for the party's transition to a more liberal platform. President Roosevelt's New Deal drew mixed

²⁰⁹S. 29, 55 Cong., 151-169 (1935) (enacted).

²¹⁰ David Goldfield, ed., *The American Journey: A History of the United States*, 7th ed. (Boston: Pearson, 2014), 742.

reviews from Texans. Conservatives opposed the federal intervention into the state's economic conditions, but as Peter Buckingham explained in, "The Texas Socialist Party," the Socialists in Texas became popular because it spoke "to the needs of the majority of the state, who were hungry, landless, and exploited."²¹¹ It was the Socialist Party that assured laborers of their newfound rights granted by way of the Wagner Act.

Because of its close alignment to socialist ideology, the Texas Communist Party also experienced a measure of success among the state's working class. According to Texan historians, George Norris Green and Michael Botson, Jr., the party championed causes such as "a minimum wage, an eight-hour work day, an old age pension system, low interest and state loans to landless farmers," which led to its progress.²¹² Additionally, the party also fought to eliminate the state poll tax and for civil rights for both blacks and Mexicans (American and nationals).

Furthermore, labor unions scored impressive victories in the late 1930s. The Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO) and the United Auto Workers (UAW) achieved the most notable success by organizing strikes against the major automotive corporations in the country. Their efforts paid off as both General Motors and Ford signed contracts with the unions by 1941.

By the end of the 1930s, the Fair Labor and Standards and Social Security Acts both addressed many of the grievances of workers. It did not completely appease labor demands in this country but they were at least political victories; however, civil rights issues were not and would not for years to come. The outbreak of the Red Scare vilified communism and dismissed any achievements made by the party. Conservative anti-communists worked to minimize the

²¹¹Peter Buckingham, "The Texas Socialist Party," in *The Texas Left: The Radical Roots of Lone Star Liberalism*, ed. David O'Donald Cullen and Kyle G. Wilkison (College Station: Texas A&M University, 2010), 86.

²¹²George Norris Green and Michael Botson, Jr., "Looking for Lefty," in *The Texas Left: The Radical Roots of Lone Star Liberalism*, ed. David O'Donald Cullen and Kyle G. Wilkison (College Station: Texas A&M University, 2010), 119.

party's interests from laborers in the state. Moreover, the labeling of union leaders as communist agents gave the impression that such organizations were communist fronts and needed to be cleansed of the ideological influence. In other words, communism needed to be contained from penetrating into the workplace. As a result labor leaders and labor-friendly politicians were targeted as communist sympathizers somehow working in conjunction with America's cold war enemies.

The outbreak of World War II halted much of the disputes between labor and employers as both groups worked together for a common cause; however, the end of the conflict signaled a beginning of a different era in labor management relations. Fascism had been defeated and the new enemy was communism. In the minds of many within the federal government, organized labor had too much in common with America's new ideological threat. Thus federal legislatures by the end of the 1940s shifted against labor. This period conveniently coincided with the beginning of the Cold War and the oncoming Red Scare. The most significant federal blow to organized labor was the passage of the National Labor Relations Act of 1947 (Taft-Hartley Act).²¹³ From a state perspective, the reversal against labor organizing can be attributed to Vance Muse, the head of the Christian American Association. Muse, a one-time lobbyist for the oil industry, while a member of the association pushed the 'right to work' laws.

Right to work laws weakened union influence over workers in a particular work place as it gave workers the right to not join a union. Thus, these workers would not have to pay union fees nor would they be required to negotiate contracts with their employers through these groups. In addition, workers would be eligible union benefits without having to join the organization. The goal of such laws was to eliminate unions altogether. Anti-labor advocates like Vance Muse

²¹³House Committee on Education and Labor, *Labor-Management Relations Act of 1947*, 80th Cong, 1st sess., 1947, H. Rep. 245, 3-6.

continued to push for laws that would marginalize unions. Congress's passage of the Taft-Hartley Act only helped his cause. That bill signaled a shift in the political climate in the country. Both Nazi Germany and Imperial Japan had been defeated and now the U.S.'s new enemy was the Soviet Union and communist ideology. It was an ideology that the extreme right believed appealed to the working classes. Anti-communists sentiment in the nation bred paranoia of a "red" takeover and made it easy for employers to combat labor union demands.

The major benefit of the Taft Hartley Act in Texas for employers was that it allowed them to hire workers regardless of their union affiliation. However it weakened unions by lowering their membership. Its intentions were to halt boycotts, strikes, and other union activities that could potentially slow economic production.²¹⁴ One provision prohibited certification by "the Board of Labor organizations" that had "Communist or subversive officers."²¹⁵ The act affected the CIO so much so that it ultimately expelled unions that had communists within its ranks. In addition, it also required unions to give notice of any planned strikes. Taft-Hartley also gave the federal government authority to intervene in a labor dispute to prevent the stoppage of work. Clearly this act intended to discourage labor organizing. Another provision of the law required union leaders to confirm they were not members of the communist party. Such a requirement makes clear the fact that organized labor was viewed as a communist conspiracy. Taft-Hartley legitimized the passage of a Texas 'right to work' bill from the preceding year.²¹⁶

The Taft Hartley Act paved the way for right to work laws throughout the country, however the movement's roots were in Texas. Muse lobbied for 'right to work' laws since the

²¹⁴ House Committee on Education and Labor, *Labor-Management Relations Act of 1947*, 3-6.

²¹⁵ Ibid, 5.

²¹⁶ Frederic Meyers, "Effects of "Right-To-Work" Laws: A Study of the Texas Act," *Industrial and Labor Relations Review* 9, no. 1 (October 1955): 77.

outbreak of the Second World War. Prompted to do so over his concern of the growing size of labor unions, particularly in Texas where union membership grew during the war and post-war eras, from 111,000 in 1939 to 375,000 by the mid-1950s.²¹⁷ Moreover, Muse did not support workers' increased power to bargain collectively which gave them increased leverage at the expense of employers. In addition, it was not just the increase in size but the composition of such groups given that African Americans joined labor unions in large numbers while also making "demands for civil rights legislation."²¹⁸ Such laws actually commenced during World War II as the presence of labor unions increased. Muse's first target was his native Texas. Muse wanted to enforce legislation that would prevent a halt in industrial production that could negatively affect the war effort. The bill inspired the passing of similar laws throughout the South. Muse was known for raising money for big oil company interests and fighting to prevent strikes such as the squashing of an attempted work stoppage in 1916. By the late 1930s, he actively campaigned against President Franklin Roosevelt accusing him of being pro-labor. Muse and his supporters in the Christian American Association used the group's newsletter to attack communists, blacks and Jews. The paper suggested, "since 1922 Russia had been establishing a Soviet republic in the southern states to be ruled by Negroes."²¹⁹ It was Muse who popularized the 'right to work' phrase in 1941. Muse spoke out against union, and "race-baited" them in order to stir anger against labor.

The anti-labor movement eventually led to the passage of a 'right to work' bill in 1946. As a defense against organized labor, the creators of the bill argued that they were "trying to save

²¹⁷ Elna C. Green, "From Antisuffragism to Anti-Communism: The Conservative Career of Ida M. Darden," *The Journal of Southern History* 65, no. 2 (May 1999): 306, accessed March 12, 2015, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2587365>.

²¹⁸ Ibid.

²¹⁹ George Norris Green, *The Establishment in Texas Politics: The Primitive Years, 1938-57* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1984), 60.

America from enslavement by the ‘Communist Revolutionists, extortionists, Racketeers, Thugs, Goons, and Common Thieves of the CIO.’”²²⁰ At that point in time pro-labor elements still had an important presence in the state senate. These representatives implemented several delays that prevented the bill from passing, they represented the last real resistance to the anti-labor lobbyists in the state government.

Muse was not alone in expressing alarm on this issue. His sister Ida Darden a prominent conservative who opposed women’s suffrage in Texas earlier in the twentieth century, focused her attention on organized labor and civil rights in the Cold War era. According to Darden, civil rights and labor organizations were “communist inspired.”²²¹ Moreover, the scheme to bring the two together infiltrated the black population in the South as part of “world-wide propaganda having its inception in Moscow.”²²² Thus Texas’s ‘right to work’ law was a victory in Muse and Darden’s eyes , but both continued to fight to spread these laws throughout the nation and a total of nine anti-labor measures were passed in Texas in 1947 alone. At the time of his death in 1950, Muse was working on proposed national ‘right to work’ amendment to the Constitution.²²³

Federal legislation against labor continued into the 1950s and it was evident that the paranoia over communist infiltration fueled it. The Communist Control Act of 1954 and amendments to the Taft-Hartley Act in 1958 both addressed the issue of labor unions. Both pieces of legislation were purposefully vague in their wording so as to take initiative to squash labor activity when it saw fit. For example, the Communist Control Act gave the United States

²²⁰Ibid, 67.

²²¹Ibid, 307.

²²²Ibid.

²²³George Norris Green and Michael Botson, Jr., “Looking for Lefty,” 123.

Attorney General the power to determine whether or not an organization was a “Communist-infiltrated organization.”²²⁴ The labeling of a labor union was based solely on suspicious activity. The Attorney General would be able convene a meeting to determine if an organization was influenced by communists or in affiliation with them. If the organization was deemed to be communist-influenced, then it would “be ineligible to act as a representative of any employee within the meaning or for the purpose of the National Labor Relations Act.”²²⁵ In other words, a communist label led to the disbanding of a labor union. Given that the Texas State Attorney General was John Ben Sheppard, a staunch anti-communist, labor union membership would be guaranteed scrutiny. Though the Communist Control Act was a federal law, state Attorney’s General such as Sheppard could then report such activity to their federal equivalent.

This act was influential in forcing labor unions to disassociate with communists. The most notable example was the CIO distancing itself from labor unions and strikes in Texas. No doubt this was a sign of the conservative shift in the organization, given that the American Federation of Labor (AFL) had once ostracized the CIO for similar reasons. Nevertheless this also meant that minority groups would also lose support as the Communist Party in the U.S. was really the only group willing to assist them with issues like poor working conditions, unfair pay, and police brutality. Emma Tenayuca, the famous leader of the Pecan Shellers’ Strike in San Antonio during the 1930s, was an admitted communist sympathizer and had for a time been married to self-proclaimed party member Homer Brooks. Tenayuca acknowledged that by the 1950s, it was difficult to find support from national labor unions because of their choice to distance themselves from any semblance of communist activity. Mexican and Mexican-

²²⁴H.R. 637, 50 Cong., U.S. Supreme Court Library 775 (1954) (enacted).

²²⁵*Ibid.*

American workers were the main groups in Texas to suffer from this discrimination. Those working in the agricultural sector were especially vulnerable because they migrated depending on seasonal demand. This migration moved Mexicans further away from the border, where white Americans viewed them as threats to their labor opportunities and their way of life.²²⁶

As Mexican workers endured this discrimination, few organizations protested on their behalf. Civil Rights groups like LULAC distanced themselves from anybody with suspected communist ties. Alonso Perales, acting on LULAC's behalf, denounced labor groups for this reason and supported the hardline anti-communist Allan Shivers in his gubernatorial campaign, saying that the candidate's unquestioned opposition to the left wing ideology was "exactly what Americans must insist that each and every candidate do."²²⁷ It was difficult finding sympathizers to their cause. According to historian Zaragosa Vargas, the Communist Party was the only legitimate organization that aided the Mexican worker by providing them with legal aid, safety from police violence, and defense against deportation.²²⁸ Indeed, Mexicans collaborated with the Communist Party, but only because no one else bothered to assist them. Furthermore, the relationship between both sides strictly involved the improvement of working conditions and civil rights. The violent overthrow of the government was not the goal of either party. Nevertheless as Tennayuca said, "any effort of the Mexican worker to organize was met with brutal force."²²⁹ Other than the Communist Party, these workers were vulnerable to such attacks. With no support outside of their locales, labor organizing just fell apart. In the instances where

²²⁶ "Interview with Emma Tenayuca," interview by Jerry Poyo, UTSA Digital Libraries: Digital Collections, Union Movement, accessed December 14, 2015, <http://digital.utsa.edu/cdm/ref/collection/p15125coll4/id/1172>.

²²⁷ Alonso S. Perales to Allan Shivers. August 19, 1954. Austin, Texas.

²²⁸ Zaragosa Vargas, *Labor Rights are Civil Rights: Mexican American Workers in Twentieth-Century America* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005), 64.

²²⁹ "Interview with Emma Tenayuca," interview by Jerry Poyo, UTSA Digital Libraries: Digital Collections, Union Movement, accessed December 14, 2015, <http://digital.utsa.edu/cdm/ref/collection/p15125coll4/id/1172>.

Mexican leaders did try to unionize, “right to work” laws discouraged them. In some cases, labor leaders encountered repression or even deportation if they attempted to organize workers.²³⁰ Even Tenayuca ceased to organize because she was unable to find jobs due to her past reputation.²³¹ Thus, Mexicans were wanted for their cheap labor, but were intimidated from challenging that role in the workforce.

Nevertheless, there were those who were bold enough to challenge the lower wages and unfair working conditions. From the 1930s onward, Mexicans joined union efforts to demand “the most basic human needs.”²³² The nation’s largest labor union, the American Federation of Labor wanted nothing to do with them and so, they often times joined forces with the Congress of Industrial Organizations, which “stood for a more sweeping economic and racial equality” than most other labor organizations.²³³ However, the CIO’s promotion of radical changes concerned American businesses and mainstream citizens. The CIO’s aggressive nature on behalf of labor caused people to question if it had communist loyalties. By aligning themselves to the CIO, Mexican workers became susceptible to communist accusations. During the Red Scare, these accusations made immigration synonymous with communism.

Mainstream society viewed labor organizing as a threat in general and Texas was no exception. The disparity in pay between whites and Mexicans in the region led to labor unrest. This only created more tension, especially during the Red Scare. In reading John Middagh’s manuscript collections, one can see that labor unions during the Red Scare were looked on with suspicion. Middagh, a former journalist in El Paso, collected several newspaper clippings

²³⁰ Zaragosa Vargas, *Labor Rights*, 56.

²³¹ “Interview with Emma Tenayuca.”

²³² James Lorence, *The Suppression of Salt of the Earth: How Hollywood, Big Labor, and Politicians Blacklisted a Movie in the American Cold War* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1999), 8.

²³³ Ibid.

detailing domestic events of the Cold War. One such account indicated the possibility of “Red Unionists” mobilizing hundreds of thousands of workers and thus threatening national security.²³⁴

The most notable incident of labor union suppression in the region involved the International Mine-Mill and Smelter Workers Union (Mine Mill). Mexican workers with assistance from the local Communist Party created Mine Mill because of the discrimination in pay and working conditions. Humberto Silex, a Nicaraguan born immigrant, was one such member of Mine Mill who commented on harassment towards union members by local law enforcement. Illegal immigration was nothing new to the region. Yet, it was not seen as a problem, especially at the conclusion of the Second World War when a labor shortage existed in the Southwest; however, these immigrants, as well as Mexican Americans, were not expected to organize. When they did, local officials claimed they were in the country illegally and they decided to suppress them. According to Silex, the El Paso Sheriff’s Department warned workers not to associate with Mine Mill. When they did, they were arrested and in many cases, deported.²³⁵ Silex was arrested on one such occasion. The official reason given by Sheriff Chris Fox for the arrests was that they were illegal immigrants involved in subversive activities. It was not a matter of illegal immigration, but rather an attempt to suppress labor organization and the potential communist threat.

According to Silex, Fox was a labor spy working on behalf of the Phelps-Dodge Corporation. Fox’s main objective was to prevent the local Communist Party and the CIO from recruiting Mexican workers.²³⁶ In one incident, Fox arrested six men based on suspicion that

²³⁴ “Danger of 600,000 Red Unionists,” 1949, John J. Middagh Papers, 1893-1973, MS 145, C.L. Sonnichsen Special Collections Department, The University of Texas at El Paso Library, El Paso, Tx.

²³⁵ Humberto Silex, interview by Oscar Martinez, El Paso, Tx, April 28, 1978.

²³⁶ Ibid.

they were crossing over from Juarez to promote communism to smelter plant workers in El Paso.²³⁷ Historian Mario García credits Fox for initiating the Red Scare in El Paso much sooner than the publicized McCarthy hearings. According to García, Fox alleged that a link existed “between Communists in El Paso and the presence of Mexican aliens.”²³⁸ Fox claimed that literature created in Mexico was dispersed across the border to promote communism. The sheriff was the one official most responsible for promoting the Red Scare along the border. He alluded to the connection of communism to illegal immigration: “I began this investigation because I resented, openly and strongly, having Mexican aliens inject their form of government into our country.”²³⁹ Additionally, Fox accused labor unions and leftists in general for their alleged smear campaign of Senator Robert A. Taft, one of the principle authors of the Taft-Hartley Act. Fox wrote a letter to several business leaders and prominent socialites in El Paso in which he claimed a “definite emergency” was confronting the nation.²⁴⁰ He charged that the AFL, CIO, and the Railroad Brotherhood were all behind an effort to prevent Taft’s re-election and of course blames the communist elements within those organizations. In the letter, Fox warns that a failure to get Taft re-elected could result in growing influence of the communist party within the federal government and even over American society in general, claiming, “If you value your own family’s stake in the present struggle against complete surrender to Socialism – if not eventual Communism – you will, I feel, be glad to do your best to service our Disaster Panel.”²⁴¹

But despite Fox’s views, and the stigma attached to communism, Mexicans faced a simple predicament. The Communist Party was the only organization willing to help them

²³⁷ *El Paso Herald-Post*, March 11, 1940, pp 1-2.

²³⁸ Mario Garcia, *Mexican Americans: Leadership, Ideology, and Identity* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989), 184.

²³⁹ Ibid.

²⁴⁰ Chris P. Fox to E.M. Kelley. January 12, 1950. El Paso, Texas.

²⁴¹ Ibid.

improve their conditions in the region; however, by fraternizing with it, they risked arrest and deportation from the local law enforcement. By 1955, the CIO withdrew its support of Mine Mill because it wanted to save itself from being red baited by the government. The CIO did try to convert several of its members though, especially in places like El Paso and Silver City, New Mexico. This attempt failed though, as Mine Mill members believed the CIO had “sold out to management and that Mine Mill was really their protector.”²⁴²

One such group that emerged to specifically challenge the unfair treatment of Mexicans in the region was the Asociación Nacional México-Americana (ANMA). Although local officials, along with the FBI, claimed that ANMA was merely a puppet of the Communist Party, no “ANMA members [were] ever indicted or convicted of illegal or subversive acts.”²⁴³ Unlike the Communist Party, whose objectives were broader, ANMA dealt exclusively with the Mexican people in the Southwest, claiming they were “objects of an accelerated program of discrimination, deportation, physical assaults, police brutality, and at times, murder.”²⁴⁴

In fighting for improved civil rights, ANMA became a target of red baiting during the 1950s at the height of the Cold War. Local and federal government agents perceived ANMA to be promoting Mexican nationalism in the Southwest. This was a direct threat to the existing *American* culture and identity. García claimed that the Red Scare “resulted not only in violations of civil liberties and constitutional protections, unjust arrests, and deportation of so-called subversives, but also in an irrational apprehension over anything considered un-American.”²⁴⁵ Consequently, Mexicans possessed many traits that the local white population, especially within

²⁴² Associated Press, “Breakup of Mine Mill Union Seems Unlikely,” *The El Paso Times*, January 3, 1954.

²⁴³ Mario Garcia, *Mexican Americans*, 203.

²⁴⁴ Ibid, 201.

²⁴⁵ Ibid, 206.

law enforcement, found to be foreign. The differences in language, skin color, and culture were threatening to them.

To make matters worse, Garcia added that the Communist Party “called for some type of possible reunification of Mexican Americans in the Southwest with Mexico.”²⁴⁶ Conservative American citizens believed this proclamation reeked of communist imperialism and perhaps led them to believe that their fears were justified. This did not however, constitute the local Mexican sentiment. The majority of Mexican Americans and Mexicans were not interested in such Cold War rhetoric and did not want to unify with Mexico, but rather to achieve equality within their local environment.

The FBI’s monitoring of ANMA provides the most telling evidence that federal authorities tried to attach communism to Mexican activism. If ANMA members spoke at rallies attended by Communist Party members, they were automatically thought to be communists themselves. This label also made them “subversives” in the eyes of federal officials.²⁴⁷ Furthermore, the FBI also linked the two groups because of their stance on police brutality against Mexicans. Both organizations advocated against the act and because of that, the FBI alleged they were tied. Ultimately, the FBI declared that ideologically, “ANMA and the Communist Party were one.”²⁴⁸ Local authorities along with the FBI targeted ANMA because of its commitment to aiding poor Mexican and Mexican American workers. In particular, Sheriff Chris Fox was instrumental in rallying El Paso’s mainstream against the presence of foreign ideas and people. Fox’s raids on local union meetings and subsequent arrests of participants were a clear indicator of his intentions to expel workers. It is unclear whether or not Fox

²⁴⁶ Ibid, 207.

²⁴⁷ Ibid, 224.

²⁴⁸ Ibid.

despised Mine Mill members more for simply being predominantly Mexican or because they were *suspected* of being communists. It is likely a combination of both. Whatever the reason, Fox served as El Paso's Sheriff for over twenty years.²⁴⁹ This fact alone is revealing of the political and social climate in El Paso. To hold office for so many years, El Pasoans must have felt comfortable and secure with Fox heading the local law enforcement.

Much of the information that locals received in regards to the supposed communist threat came from Fox. El Paso newspapers wrote of his arrests and deportations of union members. He also informed the community of confiscations made by his office of communist literature, specifically in poorer and predominantly Mexican neighborhoods.²⁵⁰ The accuracy of Fox's statements is irrelevant, because he convinced the public that a legitimate threat existed and he was there to protect them. One such editorial in the *El Paso Herald* indicated the sentiments of one of Fox's supporters, alleging that ANMA was trying to "create class hatred and stir up trouble that can be used to enlist more fellow travelers. That's the object of such speeches."²⁵¹ Though this represented only one view on the issue, the fact that Fox served more than twenty years in an elected position indicates that most El Pasoans believed in a legitimate communist threat in their community and they entrusted Fox to handle it. Through surveillance and raids on union meetings, arrests, and deportations, law enforcement ranging from the local sheriff's departments to the FBI effectively combined the issues of communism and immigration to create a *brown scare*, where Americans genuinely felt threatened.

In addition to law enforcement, in 1950 the House Committee on Un-American Activities (HUAC) addressed communism to be a menace that "[constituted] an immediate and powerful

²⁴⁹ Humberto Silex, Oral Interview.

²⁵⁰ Mario Garcia, *Mexican Americans*, 183.

²⁵¹ Editorial, "Spreading Poison," *The El Paso Herald Post*, July 11, 1952.

threat to the security of the United States and to the American way of life.”²⁵² Within the report, phrases such as “threat to national security,” and “infiltration,” were also used to describe the communist presence inside the United States.²⁵³ Another report entitled, “100 Things You Should Know About Communism,” lists several statements concerning labor organizing and its relation to communism. Issued in 1951, it urged union members to stay away from the Communist Party because it only promoted “internal revolution,” and had no real intentions of negotiating better wages or conditions.”²⁵⁴ Perhaps the most interesting aspect within this report was the definition of a fellow traveler. The report defined it as “someone who does the Communist Party’s work without carrying a Party card.”²⁵⁵ It listed organizations that the government considered to be fellow travelers. The CIO and Mine Mill were two such groups.

The report also urged people to “detect communists” in the workforce, and then “expose them and their connections.”²⁵⁶ According to the HUAC, the main objective of communists was to incite strikes against management. When looking at the suppression of the Mine Mill union and even ANMA leaders, one can see how easy it was for Sheriff Fox and the FBI to crack down on them without government or public opposition.

In far West Texas, law enforcement (local and federal) used the Taft-Hartley Act to target labor unrest along the border. Mine Mill was among these targets. According to the Taft-Hartley Act, communists promoted “dissension and turmoil.”²⁵⁷ The act targeted labor unions like Mine Mill for having communists within its ranks. Humberto Silex was banned from

²⁵² House Committee on Un-American Activities, *Protection of the United States against Un-American and Subversive Activities*, 81st Cong, 2d sess., 1950, H. Rep 2980, 1.

²⁵³ Ibid, 1-2.

²⁵⁴ House Committee on Un-American Activities, *100 Things You Should Know About Communism*, 82nd Cong, 1st sess., 1951, H. Doc. 196, 69.

²⁵⁵ Ibid, 70.

²⁵⁶ Ibid, 76.

²⁵⁷ Ibid, 39.

participating as an officer in the union because of his alleged communist ties. Also, Silex was not a citizen, only a resident, which made him even more suspicious to El Paso authorities who thought he was transporting radicalism from across the border.²⁵⁸ Furthermore, the Immigration and Nationality Act in 1952 (McCarran- Walter Act) also targeted organized labor. Though its main concern was immigration, the Immigration and Naturalization Services (INS) helped enforce the act by expelling suspected subversives and illegals from unions.

Perhaps the best example of the Red Scare colliding with xenophobia on the border, was the making and eventual release of the film, *Salt of the Earth*. In it, one sees not only the attacks on Hollywood during the 1950s, but also the targeting of ethnic Mexicans and their role in labor organizing. The movie involved the aforementioned Mine Mill and its demand for better working conditions. Directed by Herbert Biberman, *Salt of the Earth* has been appropriately labeled, “the only Blacklisted American Film.”²⁵⁹ This label applies a common term *blacklist* that was used to denote workers that went on strike and then not allowed to return to work. It was also used to refer to actors and directors that were prevented from working again in Hollywood. According to Biberman, the script, “honored people of Mexican cultural background; was an expression of their racial vigor.”²⁶⁰ Biberman described the border to be a meeting point between the powerful United States and the much weaker Mexico. Due to the disparity of power, the US exploits its neighbor in the form of discrimination.

The film portrays the multiracial Mine Mill and its strike against the Empire Zinc Corporation over wages and working conditions. These demands were to be expected, but they also argued over “the distribution of power.”²⁶¹ Mexican Americans in the region respected

²⁵⁸ Mario Garcia, *Mexican Americans*, 198.

²⁵⁹ *Salt of the Earth*, directed by Herbert Biberman, Pioneer Entertainment, 1954, opening credits.

²⁶⁰ Herbert Biberman, *Salt of the Earth: The Story of a Film* (Harbor Electronic Publishing, 2003), 62.

²⁶¹ James Lorence, *The Suppression of Salt of the Earth*, 1.

Mine Mill over other unions because it was not just a representative of labor demands but also provided a “platform” where they could call for racial equality.²⁶² Despite their larger numbers within Empire Zinc, Mexican and Mexican Americans had been mistreated since the 19th century. Their wages were approximately half that of their Anglo counterparts. Moreover, segregation was also an issue. There were separate payroll lines, restrooms, washrooms, and housing.²⁶³ The movie also demonstrated the fight of the union members’ wives for improved sanitation as well.²⁶⁴

It was within this context that Biberman developed a respect for Mexicans working at Empire Zinc. Their demands for better working conditions as well as racial equality were seemingly fair arguments; however, achieving racial equality became the bigger priority of Mine Mill members. In fighting for it, they came in contact with the Communist Party which expressed a desire to aid them in this struggle. Mine Mill was not concerned with ideology, but the Communist Party was ready to fight alongside them in their quest to achieve racial equality.²⁶⁵ Unfortunately, it was Mine Mill’s relationship with communists that made it a target of the Red Scare. The movie, which was made by Biberman, a blacklisted director, concerned local and federal authorities even more. It was in this atmosphere in which the government pursued efforts to prevent the movie’s production. According to Rosaura Revueltas, the Mexican-born actress who played the leading female role, local groups and residents used various forms of intimidation toward people associated with the movie as well as local mining communities that provided Biberman with motivation to make the movie. In an interview conducted decades after the incident, Revueltas commented that she was arrested in order to

²⁶² Ibid, 8.

²⁶³ Ibid, 15.

²⁶⁴ *Salt of the Earth*, directed by Herbert Biberman, scene in which the strike begins.

²⁶⁵ James Lorence, *The Suppression of Salt of the Earth*, 23.

prevent the movie from being made.²⁶⁶ Helicopters flew overhead to cause distractions while filming and extreme groups like the Ku Klux Klan burned down some of the miners' homes.²⁶⁷ Revueltas was eventually arrested because she was missing a seal on her passport. As a result, local policemen escorted her to another detention center in San Antonio where she was asked on several occasions about the connections between the movie and potential communist sympathizers. She was eventually deported, perhaps as the last effort to halt the movie's production.²⁶⁸

One congressman believed the setting of the film was an obvious factor in determining the communist influence over the region. He argued that Grant County's location in the same state of the Los Alamos atomic testing site indicated that communists were already in the area attempting to obtain the secret weapon.²⁶⁹ Furthermore, Congress argued that if released, the film would "inflame racial hatreds" and portray the United States as "the enemy of all colored peoples."²⁷⁰ This became more of a concern because of the region's proximity to Mexico and the rest of Latin America. The film was thought to potentially harm relations with these other countries. Several scenes in the movie depict racism by Anglos toward Mexicans. The foreman's demand of Ramon, the main character to get back to work or risk losing his job was one such incident. Another scene involves two Anglo sheriffs arresting Ramon and then beating him in an effort to stop the strike.²⁷¹ The Anglo supervisors at Empire Zinc also have a

²⁶⁶ Esteve Rimbau and Casimiro Torreiro, "This Film Is Going to Make History: An Interview with Rosaura Revueltas," *Cineaste* 19, no. NO. 2/3 (1992): 50, doi:<http://www.jstor.org/stable/41687200>.

²⁶⁷ Ibid.

²⁶⁸ Ibid.

²⁶⁹ Herbert Biberman, *The Salt of the Earth*, 118.

²⁷⁰ Ibid, 119.

²⁷¹ *Salt of the Earth*, directed by Herbert Biberman, scene in which Ramon is arrested.

conversation in which they refer to the strikers (who are predominantly Mexican) as children that at times “need to be humored and at other times, need to be spanked.”²⁷²

The portrayal of Anglos and their racist and unfair treatment of the strikers was the main reason why the government tried to suppress the release of the movie. The United States was supposed to be above discrimination of its own citizens. In an effort to contest the movie, local law enforcement and the federal government argued that the movie was funded and produced by communists. This was easy to do considering that the film’s director had already been labeled as a communist in Hollywood.

Attacks were not exclusively aimed towards labor unions or the conditions along the border. Politicians used anti-communist rhetoric and propaganda to create paranoia throughout the state strictly for political gain. The most popular political attack by Texan anti-communists against pro-labor leaders centered on the 1954 gubernatorial election. As part of the campaign for Democratic incumbent Allan Shivers, supporters produced a twelve-minute film that served as a political smear ad in the summer of that year. The film was designed to vilify his opponent and labor supporter, Ralph Yarborough. It became known as the “Port Arthur Story.”²⁷³ It was based on an incident that began eight months prior to the primary in which the Distribution Processing and Office Workers Union (DPOW) went on strike against twenty-two retail businesses in the southeast coastal Texas town. Although the DPOW had rid its leadership of communists, Shivers still used the link between former communists in the DPOW and outsiders as the masterminds behind the work stoppage. Port Arthur was portrayed as a “ghost town, shut down by picketing.”²⁷⁴ The Shivers campaign used the film to suggest “a communist conspiracy

²⁷² Ibid, scene in which Empire’s managers drive to the site through the striking workers.

²⁷³ *Port Arthur Story* (Port Arthur, 1954), accessed December 17, 2015, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Uh2iLz4x3Hs>.

²⁷⁴ George Norris Green and Michael Botson, Jr., “Looking for Lefty,” 126.

that threatened to consume Texas.”²⁷⁵ In the film, a journalist interviewed several business owners that claimed no issues had ever existed between employer and employees before the strike. One person claimed that the communists were behind the plot, while another one pledged to “take a stand and fight,” instead of giving into the picketing. All business owners interviewed expressed concern that they may be forced to close down their businesses. At the conclusion of the film, the narrator offered a gloomy warning. He suggested the strike was the work of “Northern and Eastern leftists,” that infiltrated into Texas with the intention to leave Port Arthur in “economic ruin.”²⁷⁶ He also warned that the occurrence in Port Arthur would eventually spread to other parts of Texas if Shivers were not re-elected. This was in contrast to Shivers’s opponent Ralph Yarborough, who was said to be “in bed” with the strike organizers.²⁷⁷

The reality was not as bleak as advertised. Yes, the town appeared to be deserted which led to the city being labeled a ‘ghost town,’ but that was because it was filmed at 5:00am. Most retail businesses were closed at this time. Furthermore, the strike was only held so local businesses could recognize the existence of the DPOW in the area. The campaign film was greatly exaggerated but it worked. Shivers won reelection. According to identify Green and Botson, the 1954 election was, “the last election in which labor baiting was the decisive issue in a statewide election.”²⁷⁸ The success of the film was a decisive blow against organized labor in Texas. To worsen matters, additional federal anti-labor legislation would be passed to close out the 1950s.

²⁷⁵Ibid.

²⁷⁶*Port Arthur Story*.

²⁷⁷George Norris Green and Michael Botson, Jr., “Looking for Lefty,” 126.

²⁷⁸Ibid.

In 1958, President Dwight Eisenhower proposed that amendments be added to the Taft-Hartley Act. The purpose of these changes was to further marginalize the influence of labor unions. One major requirement was that labor organizations register and provide “detailed annual reporting” to the Department of Labor.²⁷⁹ In addition, these organizations would also be required to provide annual updates to their constitutions and regulations. But perhaps the most detrimental statute to union activity was the amendment that “[authorized] the states to act with respect to matters over which the National Labor Relations Board [declined] to assert jurisdiction.”²⁸⁰ Southern states had always been the champion of the states’ rights creed. Thus the 1958 amendment to the Taft Hartley Act gave states such as Texas more authority to handle labor activity. Both Governor Shivers and the Attorney General John Ben Sheppard viewed any form of labor unrest to be communist-related. Now both had more power to quell such disputes.

A major factor affecting this issue in Texas was the Mexican Labor Program, better known as the Bracero Program. The premise of the program was to contract Mexican workers to fill much needed jobs throughout the U.S. but predominantly the southwest due to the labor shortage brought on by World War II. It started in 1942 but lasted well beyond the war until 1964. Though the government sponsored the program, Texas had its fair share of detractors. Many people in Texas still opposed it and feared that the massive influx of non-white people would threaten American identity. The more the Mexican population in the US grew, the worse they were treated. As a result, the program did not begin sending workers in large numbers to the Lone Star State until the 1950s because of the widespread opposition to it. This opposition stemmed from racism and racist policy-makers that contested that guest workers threatened the

²⁷⁹House, Committee on Education and Labor, *Amendments to the Taft-Hartley Act: Message from The President of the United States*, by Dwight D. Eisenhower, 85 Cong., 2d sess., H. Doc. 316 (Washington, D.C., 1958), 2.

²⁸⁰*Ibid.*

jobs of American workers despite the program specifically forbidding that practice.²⁸¹

Furthermore, labor unions like the AFL, CIO, and the Agricultural Workers Committee opposed Mexican workers because they also argued it would lead to the displacement of American workers. Braceros' attempted to organize on their own in some instances but suspicious Americans believed they were incapable of organizing on their own and had to have fallen under communist control. It was this racist mentality that created division between Anglos and Mexicans during the Red Scare. Community leaders like Chris Fox connected communism with the growing immigration and justified the suppression of Mexicans because of it. In doing so, he convinced the public of this conspiratorial alliance. Moreover, these organizations also alleged braceros would lower the rate of pay for all workers as well.²⁸²

To worsen matters even more, business associations succeeded in blocking braceros from coming into the state. The El Paso Valley Cotton Association decided not to contract any guest workers despite protests from local farmers.²⁸³ But this measure only added to the animosity that both conservatives and liberals had towards Mexican workers. Farmers still needed laborers from south of the border and opted to get them illegally. The so-called "wetbacks" were now sought for employment. These were workers that entered the country illegally and not part of the guest worker program. The term was derogatory yet commonly used to identify them during this period. For conservative law makers, illegal immigration was concerning because of racist views and also the fear that communists would also infiltrate into Texas apart of this 'wetback problem.' Labor unions became irate because there were no guarantees from undocumented laborers displacing Americans from employment much less preventing the lowering of wages.

²⁸¹Jose Rodolfo Jacobo, *Los Braceros: Memories of Bracero Workers, 1942-1964*, 2nd ed. (San Diego: Southern Border Press, 2004), 26.

²⁸²*Ibid*, 29.

²⁸³"Officials See Big Increase in Illegal Workers," *El Paso Herald Post* (El Paso), September 14, 1953.

Another point of conflict that fit into the typical communist narrative was differences in authority between Texas and the federal government. Texas farmers needed laborers but groups like the aforementioned El Paso Valley Cotton Association opposed hiring braceros because of disputes with the Mexican government over demands for improved working conditions. Farmers though were content to hire undocumented immigrants whether it be because of the need for any type of labor or if it was easier to exploit them. Regardless of the reasoning, state leaders spoke out against the guest worker program swell as the ‘wetback problem’ and charged the federal government with creating the problems that Texans had to experience.²⁸⁴ Thus perceived immigration problems were blamed on the federal government.

In addition, the problems regarding the Mexican border only added to a fear that communists were illegally entering the country. The agreement that the federal government had in place with the Mexican government despite state opposition was evidence of an existing red conspiracy. Right-wing fanatics, argued that the Bracero Program had been initiated under “Franklin the Great,” a nickname used to mock President Franklin D. Roosevelt, which, implied that he had authoritarian powers. In addition, the program was thought to have created numerous followers for Mexico labor Chief Vicente Lombardo Toledano. Texan conservatives viewed Lombardo as a “devoted communist,” whose workers shared his view.²⁸⁵ In their eyes, communist agents were potentially part of the illegal or even bracero labor force crossing the border into Texas. The CIO was an organization thought to be “crawling with reds,” as it was and needed to distance itself from select groups in order to defend against such accusations.²⁸⁶

²⁸⁴“Cotton Growers Hit Roundup of Mexican Laborers,” *El Paso Herald Post* (El Paso), October 2, 1953.

²⁸⁵*Odessa American*, “Border Gestapo,” editorial, August 6, 1954.

²⁸⁶Westbrook Pegler, “Union Keeps Dirty Work of Commies,” *El Paso Herald Post*, July 22, 1955.

By the 1960s, the labor movement in Texas became more attached to the growing civil rights movement that was spreading throughout the country. The right to work laws succeeded in weakening unions in Texas and virtually eliminated the socialist/progressive influence in the state. As a result, the majority of disgruntled workers were people of color. In Texas, this meant a growing Mexican population. According to Yolanda Romero, in “Adelante Compañeros,” “union organizers recognized the political power Mexican Americans in Texas were gaining and sought to mobilize these voters.”²⁸⁷ The agricultural sectors in South and West Texas became the focal points for organizing. National unions like the Teamsters and the AFL-CIO (once again combined) led the way and successfully helped Mexican Americans gain control of the city council in the small town of Crystal City;²⁸⁸ however, their efforts did not come without the usual accusations. The John Birch Society warned that the labor unions’ efforts in Texas during this period would lead to the creation of a “Socialist America.”²⁸⁹ The word *socialism* according to Charles Abel, was “merely a polite way of saying ‘Communist.’”²⁹⁰

Ironically, Mexican American labor activism increased as the Bracero Program came to an end. Even though braceros were not known for labor organizing, extreme rightwing groups perpetuated a fear of communists crossing the border disguised as common farm laborers that would gain control of the unions in order to spread collectivist propaganda. If true, one would think the end of the program would end the activism as well. In reality, it became more aggressive leading to strikes breaking out in both south and west Texas in 1966-1967. The United Farm Workers’ Organizing Committee led one in south Texas that culminated in a march

²⁸⁷Yolanda Ramos, “Adelante Compañeros,” in *Texas Labor History*, ed. Bruce A. Glasrud and James C. Maroney (College Station: Texas A&M University, 2013), 399.

²⁸⁸Ibid.

²⁸⁹Abel, Charles R. “Effort to Smear John Birch Society.” Editorial. *El Paso Herald-Post*, September 21, 1964, sec. B.

²⁹⁰Ibid.

to Austin.²⁹¹ Two others were sponsored by the AFL-CIO and occurred in Lubbock. The first one was part of a ‘war on poverty’ demonstration. In conjunction with a local Catholic Church, the labor group sought to help the “poverty stricken take advantage of various government programs.”²⁹²

The second occurred in 1967 and was also sponsored by the AFL-CIO, which backed the Mexican American Packinghouse Workers who argued that they received less pay than Anglo workers along with employers’ ignoring the seniority of Mexicans.²⁹³ In this case, the strike failed as employers brought in all black crews from Dallas. The Teamsters and the AFL-CIO competed against each other to add to their respective numbers. And although Senator Robert Kennedy publicly accused the Teamsters of corruption, it was the AFL-CIO that fell victim to red-baiting. The “stridently anti-communist” John Birch Society made several allegations that “subversives had infiltrated the unionized farmworkers.”²⁹⁴ The accused were part of the United Farm Workers Organizing Committee (UFWOC), which had ties to the AFL-CIO. As a result, the Teamsters used the accusations to their advantage in recruiting members.

Still, both groups encountered problems gaining the trust from communities as a whole and certainly from growers. According to Mary Margaret McAllen Amberson, workers in Texas were torn between two unions that had questionable reputations,

²⁹¹Ibid.

²⁹²Ibid, 400.

²⁹³Ibid.

²⁹⁴Mary Margaret McAllen Amberson, "Better to Die on Our Feet than to Live on Our Knees: United Farm Workers and Strikes in the Lower Rio Grande Valley, 1966-1967," in *Texas Labor History*, ed. Bruce A. Glasrud and James C. Maroney (College Station: Texas A&M University, 2013), 369.

“[Farmworkers] questioned the union’s motives, assuming they had ties to either organized crime or socialist organizations. The notions of collectivism, workers’ rights, and collective bargaining were frightening to many residents who had grown up during the Cold War.”²⁹⁵

The fear of communism was certainly a factor in minimizing labor activity from ever reaching its pre-World War II heights. Federal government policies made matters worse. In many pieces of legislation, the government used wording to describe immigration in the same manner as communism. Regardless of the true culprit that created this division, Mexican Americans and Mexican nationals wanted to be racially equal to whites. Communists were the only people dedicated to helping them achieve this goal. Ideology though was of no consequence to accomplishing this feat.

²⁹⁵Ibid, 371.

Chapter 6: Immigration In The Cold War: The Merging Red and Brown Scares

The Red Scare and the general suspicions toward communism can be traced to an opposition to anything foreign. Radical right-wing groups insisted that America was at risk and pointed to enemies abroad as the origins of problems at home. Pro-segregationists argued that the races were content to be separated. Furthermore, anti-union and pro-business advocates alleged labor unrest was either unnecessary or non-existent after World War II. The roots of all of these issues and the problems that they presented during the Cold War had to have infiltrated into the U.S. from outside of its borders. Because the Right believed in a traditional America, this meant the nation's problems during the Cold War were not home grown. Thus immigration during the first half of the Cold War was viewed with scorn and fear because it was believed that immigrants were potential red agents who could import communism into the nation.

While communists were indeed present in the United States, they never posed a serious threat to the government nor did they deteriorate the fabric of the "American way of life. " Instead, the post-World War II Red Scare created a highly conservative society that resisted foreign people and beliefs. The scare was based on what historian Linda Colley refers to as, "the Other."²⁹⁶ Communism, according to Colley, represented the face of the enemy in a, "time honored dialectic between Them and Us."²⁹⁷ In the midst of the Cold War and Red Scare hysteria Americans (specifically white Americans), feared that Mexican immigration was linked to communist infiltration of the U.S. In attaching the two issues, these same Americans

²⁹⁶ Linda Colley, *Britons: Forging the Nation, 1707-1837* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992), as cited in Simon Gunn, *History and Cultural Theory* (New York: Pearson Longman, 2006), 138.

²⁹⁷ Simon Gunn, *History and Cultural Theory* (New York: Pearson Longman, 2006), 138.

distinguished themselves from Mexican Americans and Mexican nationals. Moreover, Mexican American groups would also distance themselves from Mexican immigrants as an attempt to escape nativist discrimination.

These debates over foreign relations, immigration, and perceived communist threats created division between those who viewed themselves as American and those who were not. Historian Reginald Horseman has suggested that the concept of *American-ness* is linked to the scientific historians of the early to mid-19th century, who promoted the racist beliefs that led to Manifest Destiny. These historians did not create one phrase to describe the American “race;” instead it was “linked firmly to its supposed historic roots.”²⁹⁸ The roots were generally Caucasian and Anglo-Saxon, and the “Americans as a race were most often described as the most vigorous branch of the Anglo Saxon people.”²⁹⁹ The confrontations between them and Mexicans in the Texas Revolution and the war between their two nations, reaffirmed this idea that Americans were a white Anglo-Saxon race.³⁰⁰ Thus white Anglo-Saxon became synonymous with *American*. Anyone who was not of these roots, especially Mexicans, was *un-American*.

These *un-Americans* were typically of darker skin and either did not speak, or spoke very little, English. In distinguishing themselves from other people who seemed foreign in appearance or nationality, these Americans created what Benedict Anderson refers to as an “imagined community.”³⁰¹ It is imagined because Americans associated nation-ness to skin

²⁹⁸ Reginald Horseman, *Race and Manifest Destiny: The Origins of American Racial Anglo-Saxonism* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1981), 164.

²⁹⁹ Ibid.

³⁰⁰ Ibid, 209.

³⁰¹ Benedict Anderson. *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (New York: Verso, 2000), 6.

color, language and perceived ideological differences.³⁰² In doing so, they not only alienated actual foreigners but also American citizens, proving that the Red Scare went beyond fighting the perceived communist threat on the home front. The Red Scare attached racism to nationalism and anti-communism as a means of justifying “domestic repression and domination” over ethnic Mexicans and nationals.³⁰³

The US experienced similar problems in the 1920s following the end of World War I. A rise of nationalism and patriotism, coupled with a fear of communism led Americans to believe that immigrants were bringing the ideology with them into the country. Additionally, the Espionage and Sedition Acts, which were passed during that conflict, only added to the paranoia of the time. Both acts threatened imprisonment for simply expressing an opposition to the war. In addition, the Ku Klux Klan reemerged in 1915 and gained a wide following nationwide because of its broad target from solely terrorizing African Americans to also opposing immigration and leftist ideas., among others.

Even though the country experienced a period of prosperity during the decade, Mexicans seemingly threatened American identity. In an attempt to deflect attention from a downward spiraling economy, Herbert Hoover “publicly denounced the Mexican as one of the causes of the Depression.”³⁰⁴ Reginald Horsman’s analysis of Anglo-Saxon political ideology offers a plausible explanation for this blame. “When it became obvious that American and Mexican interests were incompatible, innate weaknesses were found in the Mexicans.”³⁰⁵ This shifted the policy towards discouraging Mexican immigration. The 1930s were a period of economic

³⁰² Ibid, 143.

³⁰³ Ibid, 150.

³⁰⁴ Zaragosa Vargas, *Labor Rights are Civil Rights: Mexican American Workers in Twentieth-Century America* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005), 48.

³⁰⁵ Reginald Horsman, *Race and Manifest Destiny*, 210.

misfortune and Mexicans now became a target of “racist nativism.”³⁰⁶ This nativism combined anti-Mexican racism with fears of economic upheaval caused by the Great Depression

Clearly, resentment towards Mexicans was not new prior to the Red Scare. What did change were the excuses used to prevent their presence in the country. It was similar to the 1920s position in that American identity was at stake. With the onset of the Cold War, Mexicans were attached to the stigma of communism. As a result, the United States focused on securing its borders to protect dangerous outside influences from entering the country. Mexico consisted of a people that spoke a foreign language and were considered a “mongrel race,” that was “unimprovable.”³⁰⁷ American perceptions of Mexicans had been racially motivated since both countries’ independence. The US-Mexican War and decades of tension at the border had proven that. If, as Cold War nativists believed, communism were to penetrate the country, it would do so from the south. To prevent its entrance into the country, the United States relied on its foreign policy strategy of containment. George Kennan, a national security adviser and expert on Soviet affairs, stated in his 1947 article in *Foreign Affairs*, “The power of Soviet authority is strongest today in areas beyond the frontiers of Russia, beyond the reach of its police power.”³⁰⁸ The publication led Americans to believe that communism existed everywhere, including along the US-Mexico border.

Just as hysteria swept the country during the interwar years, it did the same in the years following World War II. The federal government passed a series of bills designed to protect the

³⁰⁶ Rodolfo Acuna, *Occupied America: A History of Chicanos* (New York: Pearson Longman, 2004), 208.

³⁰⁷ Reginald Horsemann, *Race and Manifest Destiny*, 210.

³⁰⁸ X, “The Sources of Soviet Conduct,” *Foreign Affairs*, (July 1947): 341.

country from subversives. The Internal Security Act, better known as the McCarran Act of 1950, effectively repudiated American citizenship to known communists.³⁰⁹ Anyone suspected of being a communist was restricted from entering the country or allowed a passport or renewal of a passport.³¹⁰ The act also created a Subversive Activities Board to register all communists and communist organizations for the sake of monitoring. Suspected communists were susceptible to a sizable fine, deportation, or even a prison term of five years. In addition, the Communist Party was deprived “all rights, privileges, and immunities attendant upon legal bodies.”³¹¹ If an organization was identified as communist, they were subject to these penalties. One such group was the Asociación Nacional México-Americana (ANMA). Local officials along with the FBI claimed that ANMA was merely a puppet of the Communist Party. The FBI determined that ANMA was a “security threat,” and thus fell under the provisions of the McCarran Act.³¹² According to historian Mario Garcia, the FBI’s attack on ANMA was “part of the larger one against Mexicans during the Cold War that had resulted in mass deportations.”³¹³ Placing ANMA under the McCarran Act provisions ultimately ended ANMA’s influence within the Mexican community. Despite ANMA’s denial of communist ties, the FBI claimed a victory over domestic communism.

The other act, the Immigration and Nationality Act (McCarran-Walter Act) of 1952 reaffirmed much of the McCarran Act, but also strengthened the government’s power to fight communism. One provision indicated that the government had the right to denaturalize citizens

³⁰⁹ House Committee, *Internal Security Act of 1950*, 81st Cong, 2nd sess., 1950, H Rep. 3112, 1-2.

³¹⁰ *Ibid*, 8.

³¹¹ Stephen Whitfield, *The Culture of the Cold War* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996), 49.

³¹² Mario Garcia, *Mexican Americans: Leadership, Ideology, and Identity* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989), 225.

³¹³ *Ibid*.

if they had pledged loyalty to a nation or political movement that opposed the United States.³¹⁴ Obviously, the Communist Party within the U.S. represented a political movement in opposition to the federal government. Law enforcement agencies only needed to accuse organizations of having communist ties in order to claim they were in violation of the McCarran-Walter Act. Both the FBI and is the infamous anti-communist Sheriff Chris Fox justified their actions under the guise of this legislation. Historian Rodolfo Acuña suggested that both the McCarran and McCarran-Walter Acts “were aimed at giving the government broad powers to control who came into the country and who should stay.”³¹⁵ He further stated that both laws essentially divided the country into classifications, native citizens and naturalized citizens. The McCarran-Walter Act enabled the federal government to revoke the citizenship status of naturalized citizens. Additionally, the Immigration and Naturalization Services (INS) now had the authority to “interrogate aliens suspected of being illegally in the country, to search boats, trains, cars, trucks, or planes, to enter and search private lands within 25 miles of the border, and to arrest so-called illegals.”³¹⁶ El Paso and southern New Mexico made both areas and its citizenry subject to INS suppression.

Both the McCarran and McCarran-Walter Acts played a vital role in the deportation of three million Mexicans between 1951 and 1954, the largest such effort in the nation’s history.³¹⁷ By targeting unions like Mine Mill or organizations like ANMA, the INS intended to carry out the acts and purge the region of not only suspected communists, but also illegal immigrants. To gain the support of the public, government officials created hysteria to turn popular opinion

³¹⁴ U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services, “Immigration and Nationality Act of 1952,” <http://www.uscis.gov/pub/ProPubVAP.jsp?dockey=c9fef57852dc066cfe16a4cb816838a4> [accessed November 2, 2008].

³¹⁵ Rodolfo Acuña, *Occupied America*, 285.

³¹⁶ *Ibid*, 286.

³¹⁷ Mario Garcia, *Mexican Americans*, 212.

against Mexicans. They were blamed for “job loss, poor urban conditions, and every other social ill in the United States.”³¹⁸ One could argue that all three acts were successful in creating division among Americans. Historian Zaragosa Vargas states that even Mexican Americans were separated from their American identity. They were identified based on their skin color as opposed to their true nationality. According to Vargas the “surge of Anglo nativism branded all Mexicans as undesirable foreigners.”³¹⁹

The McCarran Walter Act was also instrumental in the deportation of an important actress in the film *Salt of the Earth*, mentioned in the previous chapter. The lead actress Rosaura Revueitas, a Mexican national, whose character played a key role in organizing the strike, was deported before the completion of the movie.³²⁰ She had been recruited from Mexico by director Herbert Biberman and never obtained U.S. residency or citizenship. Her role in the movie as a proud and strong Mexican woman no doubt was also seen as a threat to American society. Not only were those Mexican immigrants entering the country on their own or to make a film look upon with suspicion, but the specter of the Cold War also fell on contracted workers from Mexico. The continuation of the Bracero Program after World War II blurred the immigration issue throughout the first two decades of the Cold War. Though braceros were in the country legally, their presence still caused resentment among xenophobes who held racist views towards them. Additionally, braceros got little to no support from Mexican American groups that wanted to separate themselves from any suspicion that they held loyalties to other nations or ideologies such as communism. Groups like the League of United Latin American Citizens

³¹⁸ Zaragosa Vargas, *Labor Rights are Civil Rights*, 277.

³¹⁹ Ibid, 287.

³²⁰ James Lorence, *The Suppression of Salt of the Earth: How Hollywood, Big Labor, and Politicians Blacklisted a Movie in the American Cold War* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1999), 69-70.

(LULAC) and the American G.I. Forum vocally opposed the Bracero Program because of concerns that immigrants threatened to take jobs from American citizens. The Chairman of the American G.I. Forum, Dr. Hector Garcia, also expressed his opposition to the program because of the potential confrontations between braceros and Texan nativists. In 1951, he wrote to Texas Governor Allan Shivers and the Mexican Consulate in San Antonio to request that braceros not be allowed to work in Guadalupe County as well as the surrounding counties.³²¹

Despite the poor treatment of braceros and the opposition to the program, undocumented immigrants had it worse. At least braceros had a legal right to be in the country whereas undocumented immigrants had no such protection. Not only did they encounter depreciated wages and poor treatment in the work environment, but illegal immigrants also became a convenient scapegoat to anti-communists that alleged that the Reds were hidden within these groups and infiltrating into the country. The American GI Forum was behind a controversial report entitled, “The Wetback in the Lower Rio Grande Valley of Texas.” In this account, undocumented immigrants were tied to negative health issues, such as syphilis and lice.³²² People of Mexican descent in the Lower Rio Grande Valley opposed the report, claiming that the vilifying of undocumented workers was anti-democratic and thus contradictory to the nation’s principles. The organization also defended its view within a cold war context stating, “thru raising the standards of living of other people lies our hope in stopping Communism.”³²³

Both braceros and undocumented immigrants fell victim to the hysteria of the Red Scare and the legislation that came out of it. The McCarran and McCarran-Walter Acts made it difficult to become naturalized and to object to discriminatory practices in the country.

³²¹ Hector P. Garcia to Allan Shivers. January 19, 1951. Austin, Texas.

³²² “Draft of Resolution Adopted by Readers of the Latin American Citizenry of the Lower Rio Grande Valley,” March 4, 1952, 1.

³²³ Ibid, 3.

According to historian David G. Gutiérrez, the McCarran Act's purpose was to prosecute "anyone who had ever been even nominally affiliated with a Communist, Socialist, or other organization deemed subversive."³²⁴ The ambiguity of 'organizations deemed subversive' allowed local, state, and federal law enforcement to suppress any group that it deemed to be disruptive of the status quo. Moreover, the McCarran Walter Act only heightened tensions toward suspected enemies crossing the border as well as empowering the federal government to expel suspects already in the country. The act instituted stricter qualifications for entering the country. In addition, it also made it easier to deport "unnaturalized aliens."³²⁵ This was a phrase given to those that had not acquired citizenship in the country.

In any societal purge though, the government can only be successful if it has convinced the citizenry to support it. In this context, there were several factors working in favor of the anti-communist and anti-immigrant crusades. After the Second World War, nationalism was rampant throughout the country and in regions near the border the large presence of foreign-looking people concerned white Americans. Moreover, this group of people, whether they were immigrants or not, worked in positions where they encountered discrimination. When they tried to improve those conditions, local authorities suppressed them.

Consequently, Mexicans possessed many traits that the local white population, especially within law enforcement, found to be foreign. The differences in language, skin color, and culture were threatening to *Americans*. According to Mario Garcia, the Communist Party "called for some type of possible reunification of Mexican Americans in the Southwest with Mexico."³²⁶ To American citizens, this proclamation reeked of communist imperialism and perhaps led them

³²⁴ David G. Gutierrez, *Walls and Mirrors: Mexican Americans, Mexican Immigrants, and the Politics of Ethnicity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), 161.

³²⁵ Ibid, 161.

³²⁶ Mario Garcia, *Mexican Americans: Leadership, Ideology, and Identity*, 207.

to believe that their fears were justified. However, Local Mexicans did not subscribe to this sentiment. The majority of Mexican Americans and Mexicans did not want to unify with Mexico, but rather simply to achieve equality within their local environment. To make matters worse, Mexican American activists, as Gutierrez states, “seemed to support its major provisions, especially those that mandated strict control of the border.”³²⁷ LULAC and the American GI Forum echoed similar concerns of radical Right groups like the John Birch Society and the White Citizens’ Council that communist agents were “slipping into the country along with illegal aliens.”³²⁸ These Mexican American groups opted to prove their *American-ness* as opposed to being perceived as communists or foreign.

One common phrase to distinguish Mexicans from regular American citizens was the term *wetback*. Even though the term was a racial slur, it was commonly used to describe undocumented immigrants living or working in the United States. One West Texas newspaper article entitled, “Labor Shortage Seen in Wake of Wetback Drive,” not only invoked the term in the story’s title, but also used it several more times in the body of the piece.³²⁹ Writing about wetbacks with such regularity reminded readers that Mexicans were different. When adding concepts such as labor unions, readers tied this foreign people to communism.

Even in editorials written in support of undocumented workers, the term was used as if it had no negative connotation. In one piece, “For Shame,” appearing in *The Odessa American*, the editorial board attacked the Border Patrol for its capture of workers without regard to their humanity. As it said, “If the wetbacks were public enemies and criminals of the Alcatraz variety there might be some justification for an enormous man-hunt such as we have had thrust upon us

³²⁷ David Gutierrez, *Walls and Mirrors*, 162.

³²⁸ Ibid.

³²⁹ “Labor Shortage Seen in Wake of Wetback Drive,” *Odessa American*, August 4, 1954.

by the handmaidens of the labor unions. But what has the wetback done?”³³⁰ It seems as though the newspaper tried to separate the Mexican immigrant from communism by chiding labor unions. Still, the *Odessa American* referred to Mexicans by the specific name designed to differentiate Americans from Mexicans. Thus despite supporting undocumented workers, he/she dismisses any possibility of American identity and maintains his/her nationalist belief.

Even though groups like LULAC tried to express an anti-immigrant sentiment for the sake of preventing unfair treatment of Mexican Americans, no real distinctions were made during the Red Scare. Mexican Americans received similar treatment because Anglos generally made no distinction between them and Mexican nationals. Perhaps this view could be explained by Anderson’s theory. For neither Mexicans nor Mexican nationals fit into what Anderson called the “fraternity” that composes the state.³³¹ Vargas explains that they were discouraged from voting throughout the Southwest. Signs near voting polls read, “Mexicans Go Home,” and “Aliens Can’t Vote.”³³² Despite their American citizenship, Mexican Americans risked racial harassment if they tried to vote. It is clear that law enforcement was a key element in creating a division between Anglos and Mexicans (ethnic and immigrants).

Furthermore, the federal government referred to undocumented Mexicans in the same divisive manner that was used in public spheres. One report promoting a new system for hiring undocumented workers urged Congress to pass it for better control of the “influx of illegal wetbacks.”³³³ Within the context of the report, the actual proposal was nicknamed, the “Wetback Bill.”³³⁴ In referring to Mexicans as *wetbacks*, the federal government contributed to

³³⁰ Editorial, “For Shame,” *Odessa American*, August 3, 1954.

³³¹ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 7.

³³² Zaragosa Vargas, *Labor Rights are Civil Rights*, 275.

³³³ House Committee on Agriculture, *Extension of Mexican Labor Act*, 84th Cong, 1st sess., 1955, H. Doc. 625, 2.

³³⁴ *Ibid.*

this disassociation from all that is foreign and thus strengthened the nationalist sentiment among American citizens, specifically white Americans.

The wording within “The Illegal Employment of Aliens Act of 1954” provides additional evidence that the federal government brought negative attention to immigration. Even though the bill never directly mentioned communism and a potential connection to illegal immigration, it certainly alludes to it. Buzz phrases used in HUAC reports were employed to describe illegal immigrants. For example, one clause within the act alleged that illegal immigrants, “[constituted] a serious threat to our internal security and safety.”³³⁵ Additionally, the report reads just like it came from the aforementioned, “100 Things You Should know About Communism.” The following is an excerpt referring to illegal immigrants, “They very soon learned our ways and our customs, and they *infiltrate*. They go into industry....and they take jobs away from American citizens who are in need of work.”³³⁶

Not only does the wording of this document mirror the language in HUAC reports, but it also distinguished between American and Mexican identities. Even loyalty and patriotism was not enough to appease nativist hardliners. In 1951, Private Felipe Pacheco, an American citizen and soldier was taken prisoner in Korea. While imprisoned, his mother, Isidra Ramirez, had fallen victim to the aggressive policies of the 1950s under the McCarran-Walter Act and was deported to Mexico despite the fact that her son had been fighting against communist forces in Asia. Citing her son’s service to the nation, U.S. Representative Lloyd Bentsen of Texas was able to secure permission for Ramirez to cross the border temporarily into Laredo to welcome her son home upon his release.³³⁷ The case of Ramirez and her son can be viewed as an instance

³³⁵ Senate Committee on the Judiciary, *The Illegal Employment of Aliens Act of 1954*, 83rd Cong, 2nd sess. 1954, S. Rep. 2451, 2.

³³⁶ Ibid.

³³⁷ "Deported Woman Allowed to Meet Freed POW Son," *El Paso Herald Post* (El Paso), August 8, 1953.

in which despite Pacheco's ultimate act of loyalty to the U.S., given Red Scare paranoia ethnic Mexicans and their families were still viewed as threats to the nation's security and subject to removal.

By 1954, immigrants (legal and illegal) lacked any reputable proponents to defend their status in the country. The main manifestation of this situation came in the form of. "Operation Wetback", in which the military, local law enforcement, and the Border Patrol all took part in a mass campaign to forcibly remove undocumented immigrants.³³⁸ The maneuver was part of a greater Cold War policy. This becomes especially clear when one looks at the timing of its implementation. US involvement in the Korean conflict had concluded in 1953, but there was frustration in the country because of the inability to supplant North Korea's communist regime. Additionally, four years earlier China had become a communist state and fought alongside North Korea against American forces. By this time, the Soviet Union had already detonated its first atomic bomb and was close to testing a hydrogen bomb and it was believed that the USSR's spies had played a role in stealing nuclear secrets from the US. Adding to this paranoia was the fact that the majority of America's nuclear research and development programs were located in Border States, such as New Mexico only heightened fears that "the Reds" were indeed easily crossing into the country and obtaining nuclear intelligence from US facilities. In addition, the execution of Julius and Ethel Rosenberg in 1953, stemming from their convicted for espionage, served as proof to anti-communists that Russian agents were in the country. Finally, the Red Scare was at its peak at this time too. Joseph McCarthy had toured the nation and levied a series of charges against suspected communists, which created a wave of hysteria. LULAC and the American GI Forum got swept up in the paranoia too. To prove their allegiance to the United

³³⁸ Kelly Lytle Hernandez, *Migra! A History of the U.S. Border Patrol* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2010), 176.

States, both groups not only approved of “Operation Wetback’s objectives, but were its major proponents. The American G.I. Forum made their support known in the pamphlet “What Price Wetbacks.” LULAC’s support was evident in its spokesperson Adela Vento’s, June 1953 letter to the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops’ Committee for the Spanish Speaking. In it Vento provided a scathing report on the conditions in the lower Rio Grande Valley that she attributed to the influx of undocumented workers. According to Vento,

“As all Countries have good and bad, and thru the heavy influx of wetbacks, we not only get the honest ones, but also the undesirable, the ones with criminal record, burglars, narcotic peddlers and thousands of women (prostitutes) from the different red light districts of Mexico.”³³⁹ Vento also alleged that “90%” of the people in the Hidalgo County Prison for crimes such as murder, rape and narcotics were “wetbacks.”³⁴⁰ She concluding her missive by suggesting that citizens contact the Department of Justice and the President and urge them to end the “harmful wetback problem.”³⁴¹

Although law enforcement agencies were responsible for deporting Mexicans along the border, it is questionable if these purges would have happened if not for the federal government’s response to the Red Scare. The House Committee on Un-American Activities (HUAC) conducted several hearings of suspected communists during this period. In addition, several congressional reports addressed immigration. One aspect, which the reports on communism and illegal immigration had in common, was the language used to discuss Mexicans and communists. In a report entitled, “Protection of the United States against Un-American and Subversive Activities,” the HUAC identified communism as a menace that “[constituted] an immediate and

³³⁹ Adela S. Vento to Bishops' Committee For The Spanish Speaking. June 20, 1953. Austin, Texas.

³⁴⁰ Ibid.

³⁴¹ Ibid.

powerful threat to the security of the United States and to the American way of life.”³⁴² Within the report, phrases such as “threat to national security,” and “infiltration,” were also used to describe the communist presence inside the United States.³⁴³

Despite the aggressive campaign to remove “illegals” from the country, at the same time the Department of Labor began hiring more braceros. In July 1954, 350,000 braceros were requested for the state of Texas, yet just a few days earlier, the Immigration Commissioner, J.M. Swing asked for an additional \$3 million to assist in the repatriation drives. This money was earmarked to go towards the hiring of two hundred more border patrol officers, three airplanes, and several other vehicles.³⁴⁴

The embracing of Mexican nationals to fill jobs, while simultaneously removing them, is a familiar paradox in U.S. history. During the industrial period at the end of the 19th century, the nation faced a similar predicament. Though mass deportations did not take place then, the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 barred their entrance in to the country; however the need for European immigrants to fill jobs in industry meant a lax immigration policy that allowed European laborers into the country. Yet these same workers faced discrimination and resentment by nativists. Operation Wetback was no different in this context; however, conservative groups in Texas could also place this predicament in a typical southern context of this period: states’ rights versus national authority. Never mind that federal agents were expelling illegals. Because the deportation was occurring locally, state officials could claim they were the main reason behind the removal of undesired immigrants. On the other hand, they could also contend that the

³⁴² House Committee on Un-American Activities, *Protection of the United States against Un-American and Subversive Activities*, 81st Cong, 2d sess., 1950, H. Rep 2980, 1.

³⁴³ Ibid, 1-2.

³⁴⁴ "U.S. to Recruit 90,000 More Braceros to Fill Shortage: Total of 350,000 Farm Workers Set," *El Paso Herald Post* (El Paso), July 16, 1953.

entry of braceros into the country and thus possible infiltration of communists was mandated by the federal government.

This opposition to both braceros and immigrants must also be viewed through a Cold War lens. The 1950s was a period in which seemingly everybody had to prove their loyalty to the country and denounce communism and/or any other foreign bonds. According to a 1955 column by Valdemar Rodriguez, which appeared in the Spanish-language newspaper *Notas de Kingsville*, Mexican Americans in this period were all too familiar with discrimination at the hands of white Americans. The earlier generations were the main victims to this treatment and it generally stemmed from language differences. As the younger generations entered adulthood in the war years and beyond, Rodriguez claimed many of them were “anxious to lose their Mexican or Spanish identity” in order to assimilate into the mainstream.³⁴⁵ During the Red Scare, these same people as a means of proving their loyalty to the US distanced themselves from Mexican nationals (braceros and illegals). Still, Rodriguez insisted that no matter the efforts that Mexican Americans would make to assimilate, Anglos would continuously “[erect] other barriers to prevent an invasion of what he considers his own high standard.”³⁴⁶

The United States was not just concerned about illegal immigration from Mexico, especially at the height of the Red Scare, but was also alarmed by the legal extensions of amnesty given to exiles escaping from known communist countries. In July 1953, the House of Representatives proposed the Emergency Immigration Program, which planned to accept 240,000 people beyond the existing quotas people from communist nations in Eastern Europe. Critics though warned that the immigrants came without any personal records and thus there was

³⁴⁵ Valdemar Rodriguez, "The Mexican in the Southwest: Psychoanalysis of the Mexican on the Southwest," *Notas De Kingsville* (Kingsville), August 18, 1955, 44th ed.

³⁴⁶ Ibid.

no way of knowing “to what extent they had cooperated with or assisted the Communists” in their native countries.³⁴⁷ This concern implied the program could potentially be permitting communist spies into the US. Additionally, opponents to the bill believed allowing people from these countries would be “potentially dangerous to [their] national security,” and also cause economic hardships upon the country.³⁴⁸ The latter part of that argument was the standard nativist rebuttal against immigration. Prospective Mexican immigrants and braceros were certainly familiar with it. But the most compelling part of their opposition to the program involved an overall strategy of American containment of communism.

Led by Francis Walter (one of the main authors of the McCarran Walter Act), congressional officials believed these potential immigrants if indeed anti-communists would be better suited to remain in their native countries so as to assist in the “liberation” of their people from communist rule when the opportunity presented itself.³⁴⁹ Accepting them into the country would weaken the anti-communist presence in Europe and therefore not beneficial to the containment strategy.³⁵⁰ Critics believed it was better to keep them out of the U.S. in order to help contain communism abroad. Furthermore, allowing them into the country would make it easier for communist agents to infiltrate the U.S. and blend in with these immigrants.

Opponents to the emergency immigration program could also draw from nativists in Texas who were already demanding a closing of the border. In a period when the greatest fear in the U.S. was a communist attack, critics along the border invoked frightful language that compared Mexican immigration to the perceived communist enemies. For example, John Ford,

³⁴⁷ H.R. Rep. No. 83rd-346 at 19 (1953).

³⁴⁸ Ibid.

³⁴⁹ Ibid.

³⁵⁰ Ibid.

editor of the *San Antonio Express*, wrote of a “wetback invasion of Texas.”³⁵¹ Ford based this sentiment on a jointly sponsored survey created by the American Federation of Labor and Ed Idar, the Executive Secretary of the American G.I. Forum of Texas. The survey according to Ford contained a multitude of accusations that applied Cold War terminology to the immigration issue. First, unchecked entrance of illegal Mexicans led to “unfair competition” in the farming industry, which was an attack on free market capitalism.³⁵² In addition, just as communism was compared to a disease, the so-called “wetbacks” were alleged to have disease “rampant” among their population.³⁵³

“Illegals” were accused of carrying diseases ranging from gonorrhea to dysentery. In Idar’s report titled, *What Price Wetbacks?*, he contested that such diseases “can easily be spread in the fine homes of wetback employers and other border residents.”³⁵⁴ Furthermore, John Ford reaffirmed the worries of anti-communists by referencing the report and insisting: “in the wake of the rising tide of wetbacks there are doubtless Communist agents, other subversives, and narcotic peddlers.”³⁵⁵ On the eve of Operation Wetback, Mexican immigrants had little support as labor unions civil rights groups, state officials, and local law enforcement all had aligned against them. The federal government, which ordered the military in to sweep the region, did not help matters because on one end, it promoted a guest worker program and on the other, it sought to force out those that were not part of it. One can only wonder if the operation could have been conducted without so much support for it or if there was not a fear of a communist invasion.

³⁵¹ Jon Ford, “Wetbacks ‘Threat’ To Economy, Health,” *San Antonio Express* (San Antonio), December 20, 1953, sec. B.

³⁵² Ibid.

³⁵³ Ibid.

³⁵⁴ Ibid.

³⁵⁵ Ibid.

The operation was aggressive and federal involvement was extensive. According to Harold Frakes, a Border Patrol agent, the agency called in support from all over the country to take part in the apprehensions in the Border States like Texas, “They had a lot of people here from the Northern border, investigators, and from Florida and different places.”³⁵⁶ This did not include military forces sent down to take part in it. In, *Migra!*, historian Kelly Lytle Hernández suggests that Border Patrol officials placed themselves within cold war context and saw their mission as a means of liberation. Communist societies were often compared to slave-like states and Border Patrol agents were “interrupting discredited, undemocratic, and illegal” practices that “oppressed” immigrants.³⁵⁷ Further, Hernandez claims that the agents saw illegal immigration as a “[threat] to American democracy.”³⁵⁸ With the assistance of the National Guard and regular army forces, law enforcement groups viewed these deportation drives also as a “containment operation” in which roadblocks were set up on all major roads throughout the southwest.³⁵⁹

David Gutierrez points out that those supporters of the mass deportation drive connected illegal immigration to communist infiltration. Union President, H.L. Mitchell stated that it was “well known that the Communist Party [was] most active in all countries south of us, and that Mexico City is a center of their operation...Communist agents come across the border bot in the guise of wetbacks and as legally contracted workers.”³⁶⁰ The operation lasted into 1955 and as Harold Frakes put it, “apprehended over a million aliens.”³⁶¹ As a means of disassociation,

³⁵⁶ Harold D. Frakes, "Border Patrol Interviewee," interview by Oscar J. Martinez, 6, accessed May 14, 2015, <http://digitalcommons.utep.edu/interviews>.

³⁵⁷ Kelly Lytle Hernandez, *Migra!*, 179.

³⁵⁸ Ibid, 183.

³⁵⁹ Ibid.

³⁶⁰ David Gutierrez, *Walls and Mirrors*, 162.

³⁶¹ Harold D. Frakes, Interview, 6.

LULAC followed the American GI Forum's example and "wholeheartedly" endorsed the drives.³⁶²

Though the drive ended in 1955, it did not mean deportations ended with it. The McCarran- Walter Act remained in place for the sole purpose of purging the nation of suspected subversives. In Texas, the greatest example of such harassment upon an immigrant was Nicaraguan –born Humberto Silex. The labor leader was especially targeted because of union activism at the ASARCo plant in El Paso. As previously stated, Silex was a Mine Mill official and because of this in 1940 he was denied U. S. citizenship. The judge responsible for this action, R.E. Thompson reason that Silex was "not a person of good moral character."³⁶³ By 1957, Silex had several confrontations with local law enforcement officials because of his involvement in Mine Mill. These incidents made him an obvious target of the McCarran- Walter Act guidelines.

In addition, a witness named George Knott appeared before the Subversive Activities Board in Washington D.C. and testified to knowing a Nicaraguan in El Paso ten years beforehand. Knott also claimed that this man (presumably Silex) was a "member of the Communist Party."³⁶⁴ The accusation along with his reputation as a labor organizer made Silex a prime candidate for deportation. According to Silex, he was denied citizenship because he was deemed a subversive.³⁶⁵ His union activism ensured his arrest on several occasions not only for his role as a labor organizer, but also for entering the country illegally, despite having his identification papers.³⁶⁶ It was no secret that Silex was a leftist and worked to improve

³⁶² Kelly Lytle Hernandez, *Migra!*, 194.

³⁶³ "Nicaraguan Faces Deportation Action," *El Paso Herald -Post* (El Paso), March 25, 1957.

³⁶⁴ Ibid.

³⁶⁵ Interview with Humberto Silex by Oscar J. Martinez y Art Sadin, 1978, "Interview no. 505," Institute of Oral History, University of Texas at El Paso.

³⁶⁶ Ibid.

conditions for workers at the ASARCo plant; however, his status as a foreign citizen made it easy for local authorities to harass him and ultimately deny him U.S. citizenship.³⁶⁷ Silex represented the type of person that the McCarran- Walter Act was created to marginalize. He was a foreigner seeking citizenship but because of his efforts to organize workers, fell victim to Cold War rhetoric and targeted by anti-communists and law enforcement.

By 1960, much had changed on a national level. The 1950s was a period of the Korean War and the Red Scare; however, the following decade witnessed more aggressive civil rights activism. This changed activism was coupled with the escalation of tensions between the US and the Soviet Union. Adding to this environment was Fidel Castro's rise to power in Cuba, less than a hundred miles off the coast of Florida; an event that gave credibility to Kennan's containment policy. This was not to suggest that communism was set to infiltrate the US from abroad. It did not matter that Castro's successful overthrow of the existing dictatorship occurred for several reasons that were more complicated than the narrow view which anti-communists held. To worsen the matter, the failed 1961 Bay of Pigs invasion only intensified anxieties that communism was threatening to invade the US. The following year's, Cuban Missile Crisis caused alarm throughout the nation and caused Americans to believe that nuclear confrontation was inevitable. These occurrences exacerbated Americans the prolonged dread of an eminent communist invasion of the US.

According to David Newton, a border patrolman in the 1960s, the threat of a Cuban invasion across the Mexican boundary was one that the agency prepared for. Though no credible evidence existed of a Cuban invasion of the US, officers did express some concern. According to Newton, Border Patrol agents always carried general ammunition and weapons to defend

³⁶⁷ Ibid.

against criminals, but in the early 1960s agents worried “about the Cuban invasion.”³⁶⁸ They carried additional ammunition. As he said, you never could “tell when the Cubans might invade. So we carried the guns up there. It sounds crazy now, I guess it made a lot sense then.”³⁶⁹

Although a Cuba invasion of the US was unlikely, for anti-communist federal and state leaders, this narrative was conveniently used to maintain fear. Moreover, nativist state official used the Bracero Program as an example of what they deemed to be lax federal immigration policy. State official targeted the guest worker programs, as well as Mexicans who crossed the border on a daily basis to work. They charged as usual, that both groups were taking away jobs that could be filled by Americans. For example the Texas Federation of Labor charged that Mexicans crossing the border without passports was a violation of the 1952 McCarran-Walter Act.³⁷⁰ The federal government did not see it this way and did nothing to stop it. Still, anti-communists and anti-immigrants camps in Texas could charge that the reason for the government’s lack of support on this stance was because of a bigger communist conspiracy that existed on the national level.

In addition, a proposed continuation of the Mexican Farm Labor Program went before the House of Representatives in May 1963. Critics argued that the program “[depressed] the wages and working conditions of American farmworkers.”³⁷¹ By allowing the program to continue, free enterprise, an embraced American ideal, would be “negated.”³⁷² Perhaps a greater concern behind immigration was the merging of two fears of the 1960s: immigration and the civil rights

³⁶⁸ Interview with David C. Newton by Oscar J. Martinez and Virgilio H. Sanchez, 1978, “Interview no. 721,” Institute of Oral History, University of Texas at El Paso.

³⁶⁹ Ibid.

³⁷⁰ “Suit Seeks To Limit Mexicans,” *Lubbock Avalanche-Journal* (Lubbock), February 12, 1963.

³⁷¹ Committee on Agriculture, *Continuation of Mexican Farm Labor Program*, United States House of Representatives, 88th Congress, H.R. Rep. No. 274, May 6th, 1963.

³⁷² Ibid.

movement. Border Patrol agent, Ben Parker suggested that left-wing civil rights activists supported illegal immigration because it would increase their support base. Parker contended that the “Hispanic groups,” wanted numbers and “if a wet stays over here long enough he’s going to be a number eventually.”³⁷³ The agent’s hypothetical was similar to the beliefs that led to the passage of the Alien and Seditions Acts in 1798, designed by the Federalists to minimize the Democratic-Republican’ power base, which was partly comprised of French immigrants. In the 1960s, the Mexicans were the new threat that could potentially become part of a group that could rally behind civil rights legislation. The parallels that the Right made between the civil rights movement and communism were clear, but it also connected immigrants to 1960s activism.

The period between 1964 and 1965 was a crucial time in regards to immigration and civil rights. Not only did the Bracero Program end in 1964, but also the Civil Rights Act was passed that year, while Congress debated the Voting Rights Bill. Additionally, the Border Industrialization Program, which led to the establishment of factories along the Mexican side of the international boundary, appeared to be an answer to illegal immigration. Jobs within the manufacturing sectors would now be abundant south of the border. There would be no need to cross over illegally once the industrialization program went into effect; however, in reality it did little to curtail immigration. Mexicans migrated to the border and once jobs became scarce on the Mexican side, crossed into the US and took what jobs they could find.

Disgruntlement towards the program already existed in the U.S. because people argued American jobs were leaving the country. Increased immigration during the program’s existence would only intensify their anger towards illegal immigrants and the program altogether. Also, in

³⁷³ Interview with Ben A. Parker by Douglas V. Meed, 1984, “Interview no. 661,” Institute of Oral History, University of Texas at El Paso.

settling in Texas, these immigrants came into conflict with existing workers already in the area, which led to them leaving the border. A study of migrant workers in Oklahoma conducted in 1965, which surveyed five counties that bordered Texas in southwest Oklahoma, revealed that migrants left Texas to avoid competition with “Mexican nationals, wetbacks included.”³⁷⁴ Furthermore, the immigration of undocumented workers during this period created resentment and animosity towards anyone of Mexican descent. Migrants in Oklahoma commented that they were “better accepted” and “inferred that discrimination in labor surplus areas of Texas” were deciding factors in their leaving the state.³⁷⁵

It was clear that there was a strong nativist element in Texas that objected to Mexican immigration. The Chicano movement was more accepting of immigration and certainly shed light on social inequalities throughout the country, but it also caused concern among the conservative American population. As noted previously, Texas political officials opposed the Civil and Voting Rights Acts. They charged that the driving force behind both bills was a movement filled with communists. Conservative civil rights groups like LULAC objected to the Chicano movement and groups like the Brown Berets. A major reason for their objection was the tension it caused between conservative whites and Mexicans in general. The political climate of the era and the perceived threat to White conservatives’ way of life, led to anger and resentment towards anyone of Mexican descent. There was no distinction made between citizens or illegals. As a result, the Chicano movement caused many people within the conservative Mexican American community to distance themselves from the situation. An interview with El Paso native and former LULAC member, Estella Duran Vega, provides insight into the conservative perspective of the civil rights efforts of the 1960s, “We were ashamed to say we

³⁷⁴ Milton W. Tinney, *A Study of Migrant Workers in Southwest Oklahoma*, report (1965), 17.

³⁷⁵ Ibid.

were Mexican. Some Mexicans would say that they were Spanish. They wouldn't say Mexican."³⁷⁶ When asked her opinion as to why people felt that way, Vega responded because, "people who were Mexican would be looked down upon, as not being good enough."³⁷⁷ Vega believed the marches attached to the Chicano movement demonstrated a sense of anger and therefore did not help conditions. Though Vega was opposed to these sentiment, which t she perceived as prevalent in the Chicano movement, she could not help but empathize with undocumented immigrants looking for work and having to encounter negative elements like the Ku Klux Klan that began "patrolling the border" at this time.³⁷⁸

At the height of the civil rights movement, the federal government, which supported the two major bills in 1964 and 1965, was also behind the passage of a new Immigration and Nationality Act in 1965. On the surface, the bill appeared to be a victory on behalf of the pro-immigrant faction. It abolished the quota system, which had been in place for forty-four years. The Emergency Quota Act of 1921 and the Johnson-Reed Act, passed three years later, regulated the number of European and Asian immigrants that could enter the US (3 percent in 1921, then reduced to 2 percent in 1924) based on the population of those groups in the US according to federal census data (1910 for the 1921 act and 1890 for the 1924 act). . . These restrictions however, did not apply to the Western Hemisphere, which meant immigration from countries like Mexico had no set limits. It is also worth noting that the passage of these acts came during the nation's first Red Scare, which instilled a fear that the newly formed Soviet Union was influencing southern and eastern Europeans who made up the bulk of those seeking residency in

³⁷⁶ Interview with Estella Duran Vega by Alfredo Antonio Vega, 1977, "Interview no. 308," Institute of Oral History, University of Texas at El Paso.

³⁷⁷ Ibid.

³⁷⁸ Ibid.

the country. Mexico was excluded from quotas because the demand for labor in the U.S. was still high following World War I.

The Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965 did away with quotas but set a cap of allowable immigrants from countries at 170,000. Additionally, it placed this maximum limit on nations in the Western Hemisphere as well.³⁷⁹ The bill stated that the reason for the cap was to provide “safeguards to protect the American economy from job competition and from adverse working standards as a consequence of immigrant workers entering the labor market.”³⁸⁰ This new restriction served as the equivalent of a quota and meant to place a limit on Mexican immigration; however, it had no effect on unsanctioned immigration and in fact spurred it. Furthermore, opposition to the bill was especially strong in the South. It was a southern bloc of congressmen, Texas included, who expressed their disapproval of the legislation, insinuating that Americans did not, “want to see jobs filled by persons from foreign lands while they themselves are unemployed or live in a state of poverty.”³⁸¹ Thus the bill only intensified suspicions and anger towards immigration. The federal government had implemented pro-civil rights legislation and seemingly pro-immigration acts as well.

The Bracero Program, which ended in 1964 though initiated to fill a demand for workers during and after World War II, endured much scrutiny. Braceros encountered discrimination, low wages, and poor working conditions. These were issues that labor unions were created to protect workers from experiencing, but as Elizabeth Farnsworth pointed out: “Ironically the bracero program ended under pressure from organized labor.”³⁸² Even after Operation Wetback

³⁷⁹ Committee on the Judiciary, *Amending The Immigration and Nationality Act, and for Other Purposes*, S. Rep. No. 748, at 89th (1965).

³⁸⁰ Ibid.

³⁸¹ Ibid.

³⁸² Elizabeth Farnsworth, "Amnesty for Undocumented Workers: Mexico, Chicanos Seek Joint Strategy," *International Bulletin*, May 22, 1978, 3.

and the end of the Bracero Program, the federal government continued implementing programs designed to halt immigration. The Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965 limited the number of Mexican immigrants allowed into the country, but the plan did not go into effect until 1968.

In 1969 the Nixon Administration authorized Operation Intercept, whose main goal was to curtail the amount of drugs coming into the country. The program increased security and surveillance of the border and practically shut down border crossings. Intercept was criticized by businesses on both sides of the border because of the negative economic impact. The operation was short-lived because of outrage from citizens in both countries; however, prominent residents in Texas objected to the conclusion of the program and even suggested conspiracies existed behind Intercept's termination. In a letter to former El Paso sheriff turned prominent banker, Chris Fox, D.A. Downs, a businessman from Alamogordo, New Mexico suggested a fantastic conspiracy whereby the Mafia, communists, and corrupt capitalists were in cahoots. As he said, "I am beginning to smell the Cosa Nostra, the permanent commie pinkos and the American fast buck boys who play around in Mexico. Something tells me somebody is paying our Mexican friends to sing long and loud. To repeat the chorus again and again."³⁸³

Downs's words, if taken to represent the sentiments of his peers, suggests that local businessmen, who were staunch anti-communists, believed that the "reds" were behind the ending of Intercept. It also shows their displeasure with the federal government and suggests, in a Birch-like manner, that it was somehow in cahoots with the perceived communist enemy. Chris Fox, the once sheriff of El Paso turned banker, also downplayed the negative impact of Operation Intercept. In a 1966 interview with Oscar Martinez, Fox was presented with an

³⁸³ Doug A. Downs to Chris Fox, October 8, 1969, Alamogordo, New Mexico.

assessment that the operation “hurt relations” in El Paso and Juarez.³⁸⁴ When Martínez mentioned that businesses in Juarez “went down” and tourism declined.³⁸⁵ Fox responded: “That’s what they say.”³⁸⁶ His retort clearly shows that he was suspicious of the reasoning put forth for ending the program.

Border States like Texas, resisted immigration –of not just Mexicans, but others as well-- even before the Cold War. Yet by the turn of the 20th century, the focus of nativists was on Mexican immigration. And while federal legislation discouraged immigration from other parts of the world, it conveniently ignored it coming from south of the border. This only created a rift between Texas and the federal government. Although Texas, like the rest of the South was considered pro-states’ rights and limited government, many officials there wanted a stronger federal presence along the border. In some cases, the Border States got what they wanted in the form of the McCarran - Walter Acts and Operation Wetback. In each of these examples, the federal government in conjunction with state and local officials, executed a different form of containment than Kennan’s original premise. Instead of containing communism to its original borders, resistance to immigration stemmed from keeping Marxist ideology from entering the country.

³⁸⁴ Interview with Chris P. Fox by Oscar J. Martinez, 1976, “interview no. 214, “Institute of Oral History, University of Texas at El Paso.

³⁸⁵ Ibid,

³⁸⁶ Ibid.

Conclusion

Communism was never the real threat that government and state officials made it out to be. But the fear was certainly enough to convince the public that defensive measures against it were needed. In Texas the primary concern was not the fear of communists infiltrating into the state, but rather that their traditional identity and way of life was at risk. Communism was the convenient villain to blame during this period in order for the Right to oppose what it perceived as sweeping changes in society. Anti-communist rhetoric was used to justify opposition to progressive and civil rights legislation. In doing so, conservative officials in Texas used what historian Elaine Tyler May has designated as domestic containment. Whereas George Kennan stated that communism needed to be contained from spreading beyond its Soviet borders, May believed that domestic containment was a strategy for keeping any kind of challenges to traditional society out of the country. In this case Texas wanted to keep not just communist influence out of the state, but any potential changes that could upset the status quo. Thus domestic containment was about maintaining a traditional and conservative society, free of any perceived outside influences. This meant an opposition to any leftist ideas or the expulsion of existing left-wing elements in the state.

To the Right in Texas, the traditional American identity was attached to white Anglo-Saxon stock and the English language. That however, was only part of the component. Additionally, Texas had a heritage linked to the South and thus included much of the southern culture, which was imbedded in slavery, white supremacy, and defiance against the federal government. After all, it did secede from the union and joined the Confederacy during the Civil War. Furthermore, the Lone Star State had a violent past full of instances of predominantly southern white migrants fighting to conquer and then ultimately preserve their identity.

Southern migrants overran Texas prior to its independence and drove out the existing Mexican power structure. Once in control, the new white Anglo-Saxon power structure targeted the remnants of Mexican influence in the region and minimized any potential future influence. The U.S.-Mexican War only intensified white Texans' resentment towards Mexicans and the violent acts that they committed against them was proof of that. When Tejanos attempted to resist, as in the case of the Plan of San Diego, the state's conservative power structure responded with indiscriminate violence against the Mexican population, making no distinction between friend and foe.³⁸⁷ Though not all people of Mexican descent supported the plan, the Texas Rangers and local law enforcement treated the people along the border as though they did.

Blacks in Texas experienced similar if not worse treatment than people of Mexican descent. The legacy of slavery was manifested through Jim Crow laws. And like Tejanos, African American Texans were marginalized via disfranchisement. The state implemented poll taxes and literacy tests with the sole purpose of limiting their political power. If either blacks or Tejanos dared to challenge the white power brokers, it was not uncommon for these groups to encounter vigilantism, usually from the Ku Klux Klan or angry mobs. Lynchings were a means of intimidation to discourage defiance by non-Anglo groups and it was not until the 1930s that the practice was ended in Texas.

Despite their common experiences with discrimination and limited political power, Blacks and Tejanos failed to unite against the white power structure and sought different avenues to break down barriers. In fact, Mexican American groups such as LULAC which formed in 1929 promoted disassociation from blacks and assimilation and accommodation into white culture to make Mexican Texans more tolerable to the majority Anglo population. When

³⁸⁷ Benjamin Johnson Heber, *Revolution in Texas: How a Forgotten Rebellion and Its Bloody Suppression Turned Mexicans into Americans* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005),

LULAC pursued efforts to desegregate the schools, its only interest was to integrate Mexican American students, disregarding black interests to do the same.

Once World War II ended and the Cold War began, fear became the main factor behind domestic containment. Extremist groups viewed issues such as civil rights, voting rights, integration, and general equality as issues that were instigated by communist elements in the country and served as part of an international conspiracy that the Soviet Union had sponsored. These concerns originated in the 1930s, in opposition to Franklin Roosevelt's New Deal programs which they believed threatened America's free market economy. Roosevelt's status as a Democrat also shook up the state's political scene as well. At the time Texas was pro-Democrat when it came to the ballot box, but the Democratic Party to them was one that emphasized states' rights and limited federal government. The New Deal went against those principles.

But the outbreak of World War II prevented any substantial reaction from developing in Texas against Roosevelt as it consumed the majority of the nation's attention and rightfully so; however, business leaders in addition to extremist Right-wing groups went on the attack once the war ended. The national narrative that communism was the new villain only strengthened their support among the state's populace. These leaders accused the post-war Democratic party of being a collectivist and threatening individualism.

Opposition to communism did not only come from business leaders. Elected officials spoke out about the threats of communism and linked it to proposed changes occurring in Texas. Attorney General John Ben Sheppard alleged that communists were behind groups in the state that were trying to bring about changes such as desegregation and civil rights reforms in general. On one end, state leaders looked at communism as the major villain in Texas, but because of the

shifting policies of the Democratic Party under Roosevelt and then under Truman, these same leaders expressed concerns against the federal government as well. These leaders were backed by groups like the National Council for American Education (NCAE) that suggested that public school teachers were out to indoctrinate students with socialist propaganda. Groups like the NCAE only heightened people's fear of a perceived communist threat and with McCarthyist paranoia spreading throughout the country, only intensified matters. To conservative leaders in Texas, the Red Scare was an opportunity to attack reforms in the state. By attaching the negative stigma of communism to issues like civil rights or labor activism, the Right could gain more support from the general population against these issues and thus maintain or even enhance their status in the state.

Even Republican President Dwight Eisenhower did not silence the emerging anti-Democrat base in Texas. The John Birch Society attacked him and suggested conspiracies of his communist ties. Birchers generally suspected the federal government of communist leanings and picked up where McCarthy left off in spreading paranoia. Texas Birchers used the organization's national narrative that the Supreme Court was also part of a communist plot. Birchers like J. Evetts Haley levied these accusations in response to the *Brown v. Board* decision, which was strongly opposed in Texas and the pro-segregationist society.

Groups like the John Birch Society and more extreme cases like the Ku Klux Klan attacked anyone that threatened traditional society in Texas. While the NAACP was a common target because of its push for civil rights reforms, extreme Right groups even charged churches that taught the social gospel of communist leanings. Texas was not short on groups that were determined to preserve the state from liberal reforms whether they were communist or not.

The *Brown v. Board of Education* decision dealt the most decisive blow to traditional society in Texas. Though the decision impacted the South in general, Texas was unique in that it not only had Jim Crow laws in place to separate black and white societies, but also to separate whites from the substantial Mexican population as well. Texan government officials saw groups like the NAACP and LULAC as the instigators of change and to blame for the court's ruling to desegregate. Not surprisingly, these same officials accused these organizations of being a part of a communist ploy to indoctrinate people of color. The Attorney General John Ben Sheppard believed the NAACP was a communist organization and believed integration of schools would lead to communists infiltrating into the school system. In opposing the Supreme Court's decision, Sheppard along with religious and business organizations, used anti-communist rhetoric when referring to their opposition to pro-integration groups.

In addition, Texas also accused the federal government of exceeding its authority in forcing desegregation on the nation. Officials based their accusation on not just *Brown v. Board*, but other cases like *Sweat v. Painter*, *Delgado v. Bastrop ISD*, and *Shelley v. Kraemer*. Furthermore, Truman's executive order to integrate the armed forces in 1948 and Eisenhower's sending of national guard troops to Little Rock, Arkansas in 1957 to ensure black students were allowed to enroll at Central High School were also examples that Texas pointed to in order to justify their claims.

By the end of the 1950s, conservative Texans were suspicious of both political parties. To them, the Democratic Party was the traditional party of the south; however, it was Franklin Roosevelt and Harry Truman, two Democrats that oversaw what they perceived as increased centralization of the federal government. The Republican Party under Dwight Eisenhower did not seem all that different. Groups like the John Birch Society accused him of being a

communist sympathizer. In general, the Right in Texas saw the passage of laws and Supreme Court decisions during the Cold War as proof of communist infiltration into the government. It is unclear if conservative leaders in Texas and throughout the nation for that matter genuinely believed that civil rights legislation and the Supreme Court rulings were real indications of communist subversion into the federal government. Nonetheless, these leaders perpetrated the narrative that communists were behind the changes taking place in society to a populace that was easily manipulated into believing that a communist takeover was the goal behind desegregation.

The integration of schools in Texas would not take place all at once. In cases such as Ector County, desegregation did not occur until 1982. School districts throughout the state delayed or simply ignored the mandate until threatened with injunctions by the federal government; however, there were communities that did choose to integrate soon after the *Brown v. Board* ruling. These communities should be lauded for these decisions not just because of the promotion of education equality, but also for withstanding pressure from surrounding towns that threatened retribution for conforming to the federal government's authority. Both Big Spring and San Angelo encountered economic pressures from nearby communities as well as from state officials because they chose not to defy the Supreme Court. Thus cities that cooperated with the federal ruling encountered threats from pro-segregationists in the state. In turn, state officials continued to levy accusations toward the federal government as being too authoritative and communist. They could suggest that communities like Big Spring and San Angelo had succumbed to communist influences which only bolstered their support from a largely anti-communist population. People like J. Evetts Haley and other Birchers even suggested this about city leaders in San Angelo because of their friendly ties to Lyndon Johnson, a common target of the organization.

Another common practice against desegregation was the dissemination of literature meant to prey on people's objection to racial mixing. Pro-segregationist conservatives feared that integration would lead to interracial relationships that would ultimately contaminate the purity of the white race. Thus in this case one sees how pro-segregationists practiced a means of containment by urging against the two races intermingling. And just as the state resisted integration through literature and vilifying its proponents, it also responded through legislation. In the years following the Brown decision, Texas state officials proposed and passed a number of bills that aimed to preserve a segregated society while also taking aim at groups like the NAACP and its perceived communist agenda.

The NAACP was not the only organization in Texas that the Right accused of having communist ties. Labor groups received most of the scorn from anti-communists during the first half of the Cold War. Anyone attached to a labor group or seen as a supporter of labor rights encountered a wide range of harassment from Texans in the state government as well as businessmen. Yet labor does differ from the other issues discussed in this study. Indeed there was a communist element working to promote labor rights particularly in El Paso and among workers of Mexican descent. The dynamic between the Communist Party and labor unions was such that unions like Mine Mill accepted support from the left-wing organization only because everyone else abandoned it. The American Federation of Labor (AFL) and Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO) were reluctant to assist such groups because of the Red Scare and they feared being labeled as communist sympathizers.

Workers simply wanted fair treatment, equal pay to whites, and an end to police brutality. Unfortunately for them, none of the major labor organizations in the country assisted them with these grievances. Labor experienced momentum in the 1930s with the passage of the Labor

Management Relations and the Fair Labor and Standards Acts, but that all changed at the onset of the Cold War. The Taft-Hartley Act of 1947 weakened unions in Texas by allowing employers to hire workers regardless of union affiliation, thereby rendering the Wagner Act ineffective. It also restricted certification of unions who had communist members or suspected members. Additionally, it required union leaders to confirm that they were not members of the communist party.

It was federal legislation like the Taft-Hartley Act that forced national groups including the CIO to withdraw any potential support to laborers along the border. It also facilitated the creation of 'right to work' laws, the first of which was passed in Texas. But the reasons for 'right to work' bills in Texas were not just about marginalizing labor activism. What concerned anti-communist and anti-civil rights businessman, Vance Muse was that the growing demographic within labor unions in Texas were blacks and Mexicans. Because of that, Muse believed labor and civil rights organizations were communist-inspired. Thus the idea of labor activism frightened the Right, especially business leaders because they feared losing influence over production. Furthermore, the incorporation of historically discriminated people like blacks and Mexicans into these unions were doubly concerning because of what it could mean for civil rights advances for both groups, not to mention that labor unions accepting them was already an indication of desegregation.

Another group that emerged on behalf of Mexicans in Texas was the Asociacion Nacional Mexico-Americana (ANMA). ANMA focused on the poor treatment of Mexicans in the Southwest and in places like far West Texas, because they were the target of local and federal scrutiny. Both the sheriff's department in El Paso and the FBI designated the organization as a

puppet of the communist party. Regardless of communist affiliation, labor groups in Texas suffered constant suppression tactics at the hands of law enforcement and the state government.

Because of the state's proximity to the Mexican border, immigration was another concern to Texans as they connected their existing prejudice toward Mexicans to the possibly threat of communists crossing over and spreading their ideology. To staunch anti-communists, the idea of a homegrown leftwing movement was impossible. The state was perfect as is, and there was no need for the population to be uneasy about civil rights issues, working conditions, or discrimination. The notion to protest against these conditions had to have been imported into the country. Just as with labor, even if unintentionally, local, state, and federal governments passed laws and cracked down on immigration during the first half of the Cold War. The Internal Security Act of 1950 restricted anyone suspected of being a communist from entering the country. It also ultimately registered communists and communist-leaning organizations for the sake of monitoring them. Additionally, the law led to deportation of suspected communists. The aforementioned ANMA lost its influence over the Mexican community in Texas because the FBI deemed it such an organization.

In addition, to the Internal Security Act, the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1952 gave the government the power to denaturalize citizens if they were part of a political movement that opposed the U.S. This was not an exact science though and the FBI along with local law enforcement could simply accuse organizations of communist loyalties in order to shut down or harass them.

Both acts were created to target recent immigrants into the country. The Bracero Program, which consisted of guest workers from Mexico working in the U.S., was especially susceptible to harassment. Working conditions and pay was never optimal for braceros, but if

they dared speaking out against the unfairness or organizing fellow workers, the federal laws could easily be enforced to silence the protests. Furthermore, illegal immigrants also became targets of local resentment during this period as well. And with assistance from the federal government, the expulsion of this group became a reality. Operation Wetback was the manifestation. In this case, local, state, and federal authorities rallied public support to their side by creating myth that undocumented workers were responsible for the economic downturn and social decay. The Immigration and Naturalization Services (INS) could then use the hysteria to back it in rooting out not just illegal immigrants but also suspected communists as well. The operation created a strong Anglo nativist reaction in Texas that branded all people of Mexican descent as foreigners, regardless of nationality. During the operation, millions of immigrants were deported to Mexico. Yet, the Bracero Program continued, which only added to the paranoia; a Brown Scare, because nativists and law enforcement were always suspicious of the braceros' legal status. Even Mexican Americans feared the white population could potentially question their loyalties. This unfortunately led to civil rights groups like LULAC and the American GI Forum publicly supporting the mass deportation and disassociating from recent Mexican immigrants.

The history of Texas during the first half of the Cold War is important, because of the status of the country at that time. There were so many watershed moments during that period of 1945-1965, such as the near confrontations with the Soviet Union, the Bracero Program, Operation Wetback, the Korean War, the McCarthy witch hunts and the Red Scare, desegregation, the civil rights movement, the Vietnam conflict, and the Border Industrialization Program. All of these events occurred during the first twenty years of the Cold War. To see these events through the lens of Texas presents a different perspective toward all of them. One

can certainly see the benefits, which the Civil Rights movement provided, and its legacy can be seen in the state today; however, the state's officials largely opposed much of it at the time and tried to associate it with America's then greatest enemy.

Texans tried to hold on to a traditional society that embraced segregation, opposed labor organization, and the preservation of a predominantly white community. For Texas right-wingers, these ideals represented their version of America. Texas's opposition to desegregation, labor regulations, and immigration was imbedded in a regional and cultural belief of states' rights. Yet, its labeling of anything that was against the status quo as communist, was the state's way of demonstrating its national loyalty as well.

Loyalty to nation is a theme that runs throughout the course of U.S. history, but sometimes as we have seen it takes on epic proportions and spurs nativist feelings against immigrants. This was true in the early national period as evident with the Federalists' distrust of immigrants and of course in the 1930s during the Great Depression. So too did nativism rear its head following the two world wars. As we know the same was true for the 21st century, when illegal immigration once again became the focus of nativist groups. As opposed to the Cold War Era when communism embodied the great fear, 'in the present the new "ism" that causes fear in this country is terrorism, and just like in the 1950s when anti-immigrant activists claimed communists were illegally crossing the border, there are now those who believe that terrorists infiltrating the U.S. via its southern border, and of course one presidential candidate has risen to power once again targeting Mexicans as the greatest threat to the nation's security.

In addition recent Supreme Court civil rights rulings declaring constitutionality of gay marriage (the Windsor and Obergefell cases) and the federal government's mandate allowing r

trans-gendered people to access the restrooms of their chosen gender has led to a strong conservative response in the state, just as it did after *Brown v. Board* and the civil rights legislation. Led by Governor Greg Abbott, communities throughout the state have announced loud and clear their intentions to defy the federal mandate and the overall vitriol aimed at the LGBT community parallels to what the black population experienced during the Civil Rights Movement. Additionally, Texas has now moved towards the creation of local and state ordinances banning trans-gendered people from using the restroom of their choice. This is no different than state legislators creating bills aimed at banning the NAACP or simply promoting means to preserve segregation in public schools. And when one community decides to buck popular state opinion, it is met by intimidation and threats from the political figures. Lieutenant Governor Dan Patrick recently scorned Kent Paredes Scribner, the Superintendent of the Fort Worth Independent School District following his announcement that he would comply with the federal ordinance. Patrick even suggested that Scribner resign from his position. This intimidation mirrors the way Texas legislators handled the desegregation mandate. When a school opted to desegregate, other communities threatened financial consequences.

Furthermore, Texas has now clashed with the federal government over abortion access. The Supreme Court recently struck down the state's attempt to reduce access to abortion clinics. Just like with the rulings on gay marriage and trans-gendered access to restrooms, conservative Texans believe the Supreme Court's decisions are direct attacks on their values instead of strides towards social equality.

Additionally, recent clashes between police and protest groups like Black Lives Matter throughout the country, have incited the Right even more. Like the NAACP in the 1950s, extreme conservatives have labeled Black Lives Matter a domestic terror threat (although the

NAACP during the Cold War was a supposed communist threat). Like the court rulings, such groups are seen to be a threat to traditional American society. It will be interesting to follow this particular showdown by fundamentalist conservatives against the federal government and what ultimately leads to the calming of tension in the state as well as the entire country over this issue. What is clear however, is that the perceived threat of communism on traditional values in the state, has now been replaced by a supposed threat of terrorism and/or a believed attack on fundamentalism.

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Vita

My name is Frank DeLaO. I am a Professor of History at Midland College and have worked here since 2001. I am married with three children. I graduated from Texas A&M University in 1999 with a Bachelor's Degree in History, then took a two year break from school before returning and getting a Master's degree from UTPB in 2003. Then I took another four years off from school....and went back. Currently I am in the process of completing my Dissertation towards a Doctorate degree from the University of Texas at El Paso. If all goes according to plan (which it rarely does), I will have completed that degree by the end of the Fall of 2016.

When it comes to education, I love History and all forms of it. My favorite topic is the Cold War and more specifically the American containment policies and strategies during that period. In fact, my dissertation is over just that subject and how containment manifested itself in Texas during the first half of the Cold War. From a foreign policy perspective, I am also fascinated by US policy toward Latin America during this period as well. Additionally, I am interested in the impact of economics on history.

Contact Information: fdelao@midland.edu

This thesis/dissertation was typed by Frank DeLaO