

CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY, NORTHRIDGE

IS CHICANO A TYPE OF CHICKEN? CHICANA/O SOCIAL MOVEMENTS  
THROUGH CHILDREN'S LITERATURE

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements

For the degree of Master of Arts in

Chicana and Chicano Studies

By

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## **Dedication**

Para mi madre y mi padre

To my Kika, Chris, Shoes & A.Lo

My Jules & Vivi

The Estrada Clan

Tristen & Devon, don't let others define you

The entire Urquiza family

To all the little Chicanitas and Chicanitos that struggle to find faces that look like theirs  
in their elementary books.

Maria Guadalupe Rendon. En paz descansas tia.

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## ABSTRACT

### IS CHICANO A TYPE OF CHICKEN? CHICANA/O SOCIAL MOVEMENTS THROUGH CHILDREN'S LITERATURE

BY

Soraira Urquiza

Master of Arts in Chicano and Chicana Studies

An ethnographic literary content analysis examined how Chicana/o social movements, activists, and issues have been conveyed in three children's books for ages 4-8 years: *Side by Side/Lado a Lado: The Story of Dolores Huerta and Cesar Chavez* (Brown, 2010), *From North to South/Del Norte al Sur* (Colato-Lainez, 2010) and *That's Not Fair! No Es Justo! Emma Tenayuca's Struggle for Justice* (Tafolla & Teneyuca, 2008). Findings noted how textual themes such as heroification (Loewen, 2008) of leaders may lead to children's misunderstanding of leaders as larger than life and impossible to emulate. In contrast, textual themes of humanization (Freire, 1970) present in all of the texts could support children to see the real life challenges faced by leaders and everyday people and encourage children to see themselves as capable of creating positive changes in the world. Overall, the study points to the significance of Chicana/o children's literature addressing relevant current and historical events as important to the development of positive identity for Chicana/o children. In addition, developing and promoting a wide array of diverse multicultural historical literature is seen as important for all children.

## Chapter One: Introduction

“Today Devon asked me, what’s Chicano? Is it a type of chicken?”

The quote above is from a Facebook status update from my brother-in-law. He is a later generation Chicano and it was his 12 year old daughter (mixed, half Chicana half white) who asked the question. I could not help but think, back to when the first time I heard the word Chicano. It came from a television episode of *Saved by the Bell: The College Years* (Higuera, 1993). In this episode one of the lead characters and new college student AC Slater (Mario Lopez) delves into his history and realizes that in an effort to assimilate into a military academy, his father changed the family last name from Sanchez to Slater. With the help of a Chicana activist mujer, Teresa, he learns about his Mexican ancestry, and becomes active in the movement for a Chicano Studies department at the university. Up until this point I just thought I was Mexican-American, and there was nothing really special about it. However, when I heard the word, Chicano, I instantly wanted to know more about it, I was a preteen and something inside of me changed. I had a word for what I was, Chicana. Not a hyphen, but an actual word! The pride behind that was amazing! I was then saddened to think that this child was well on her way to adolescence and had never heard the word that essentially encompasses a huge part of her identity and history. I was even more upset when I realized that it took a television sitcom to tell me what a Chicano was. Why hadn’t my teachers in elementary school said anything? Why were all my books about Charlotte and her web or the great adventures of “Fudge”? Where was the person who looked like me? Why is that when there was someone who somewhat resembled me, it was all about how dirty they were, their

accents were being mocked or how they were always on a farm? Where was the word Chicana/o and our actions for civil rights?

The Civil Rights movement is one of the defining events in American history, providing an invigorating and enlightening example of Americans fighting for the ideals of justice and equality. However when young students learn about this pivotal point in American history, they are primarily exposed to the struggles and victories of the Black Civil Rights movement. Through the use of child appropriate language, songs, tales and books children memorize the names of Dr. Martin Luther King, Rosa Parks, and Malcolm X. It is at this time that children learn how to recognize injustice. They learn about the role of individuals, as well as the importance of organization and most importantly they learn that people can come together to stand up against oppression.

While the central figures, actions and meaning of the African American civil rights movements should be studied and learned, children need to also develop knowledge and awareness of other civil rights movements as well. In particular Chicana/o children need to have exposure and awareness of the Chicana/o civil rights movement and how it too was a multi-faceted movement. In recent years public schools have increasingly included César Chávez and the farm workers movement in California curriculum. My research will examine how the Chicana/o Civil Rights movement has been portrayed and communicated in children's literature. The goal of this thesis project is to employ a literary ethnographic content analysis in which children's books are the primary sources and address the question of how have Chicana/o social movements, its activists and issues been conveyed in children's literature? My objective is to provide a solid analysis of the literature that will educate the Chicana/o community of the heavy

influence of our children's books as well as the delicate balance of heroification and humanization. This will allow me to gain the respective knowledge of both Chicana/o literature and history which will allow me to produce my material contribution to the Chicana/o community, a historical children's picture book on the Chicana/o Movement. My hope is that this book will be utilized as an effective teaching tool for Chicano children, grades K-3 (ages 6-9). The book will be formatted in an alphabetical sequence in which each respective letter of the alphabet will provide historical events, facts and figures, with short narratives and vivid pictures to assist the Chicana/o child in relating to the subject. The book will be titled, *Is Chicano a type of Chicken? An Alphabet Book of Chicana/o History*.

### **Historical and Current State of Chicana/o Latina/o Representation in Literature**

As we begin our academic journey Chicana/o children are introduced to the wonderful world of literature and history, unfortunately we are unaware that often times it is a colonized version of literature and history that is being conveyed by our educators. As a child, there was rarely a brown face in my books. The word Chicana/o was not present in any of the literature my classmates and I were exposed to. At this point the only Mexican character I was familiar with was Speedy Gonzales, sadly, as I later learned, the stereotypes were not just on my television but also in my books. In an ideal world, children would have the educational tools and books that reveal to them who they are and where they come from. However, historically our children's books have been filled with labels, stereotypes and assumptions that make it very difficult to relate to or understand. The omission and distortion of Chicano/as/Latina/os from mainstream literature and history has led to feelings of confusion, self-doubt and marks the beginning

of the struggle between the two dichotomous roles that we as Chicana/os are often faced with. The importance of applicable literature and the availability of the literature are important in the identity development of all children; however relevancy, exposure, and access to such literature have been major issues for Chicana/o children. As Herrera-Sobek (2002) articulated in her analysis of children's songs, "Since cultural concepts encompassed by the group's ideological system are perceived as important for the continuation and propagation of that system, socialization and enculturation of these concepts begins early in the life of each individual" (pgs.83-84). My methods will employ a content analysis of the following children's books: *Side by Side/Lado a Lado: The Story of Dolores Huerta and César Chávez* (Brown, 2010), *From North to South/Del Norte al Sur* (Colato-Lainez, 2010) and *That's Not Fair! No Es Justo! Emma Tenayuca's Struggle for Justice* (Tafolla & Teneyuca, 2008). While this is a limited sample, the intention of the thorough analysis is to demonstrate how relatable literature, events and history are important factors to the development of Chicana/o identity for children.

The great author and poet Maya Angelou stated, "I would encourage us all, African Americans, Asians, Latinos, Whites, Native Americans to study history. I long for the time when all the human history is taught as one history. I am stronger because you are stronger. I am weaker if you are weak. So we are more alike than we are unlike." (<http://www.wisdomquotes.com/quote/maya-angelou-11.html>). However, one must ask can the utopia of "human history" that Dr. Angelou describes above, be achieved if our children are being shown a colonized version of history and literature and not their own? Alma Flor Ada (1992) stressed,

All children have the right to have their language and cultural identity recognized by the school. They all deserve to dialogue with the books they read in order to recognize that protagonists live not only on printed pages, but in daily life – that all children are indeed valued protagonists, the protagonists of their own life stories. (p. xiii)

However Chicana/o children do not often see themselves as the protagonist, instead they are exposed to stereotypes of their culture or only acknowledged during certain ethnic holidays. Another common thread that I have observed, are the illustrations. The characters are almost always wearing ethnic style clothing; big, wide-brimmed sombrero, a brightly woven serape poncho, huaraches (sandals), the men almost always have a thick long mustache, and the women wear hand-embroidered dresses, silver and stone jewelry and their braided hair pinned up atop their head with flowers. With all of these negative or over-exaggerated images of Mexican culture, it is no wonder that our children gravitate towards the Anglo picture books and novels, these depictions are not relatable.

Depriving our children of their history is an injustice to them as Chicana/os. Chicana/os have been skewed or blatantly absent from history. As Ada has affirmed “Latino children in the United States have suffered a great deal from the ways in which their culture, particularly in its most creative and representative aspects, has been rendered invisible by the mass media and within school curriculum” (2003, p. xiv). Virginia Henderson recalls a story in which her daughter began rejecting her African-American culture because she did not see herself reflected outside of her home. The child began to cry out to be “white and blonde” like her classmates (1991 p.22). Our children

spend a majority of their lived days in school and in the classroom is where they learn about themselves and their society.

Other people see the same reality that we do, but perceive it differently.

Unless we are challenged to change perceptions to fit reality, it is far more comfortable and simpler to accept our own perceptions as unshakable fact.

Those challenges are crucial in our understanding of our perceptions of ourselves and of others, and in the development of self-esteem.

(Henderson, 1991 p.15)

If our children are constantly reminded of the negative labels that society has placed upon them then what kind of students and adults will our children grow to be? Reading the elaborate and heroic stories of others can lead to the misconception that they are only special on certain holidays, if at all.

### **Absence of Chicana/o History in Children's Books**

Literature is such a powerful tool in a child's life. An effective and positive book can make a great impact on their psyche and their well-being. "Books provide models for what children can do when faced with difficult life situations, the need to make a moral decision, the necessity to make a choice, or opportunity to make their own decisions and thus create their own path" (Ada. 2003 p.10). In addition to helping assist with ethical dilemmas, literature can also have a great impact on how the child views others.

Donnarae MacCann (1998) explains:

There was little reason for the European American child to doubt his or her racial superiority because the storybooks, periodicals, schools, churches, and government authorities were all sending the same signal.

Racial bias reached White children through books, and also by the way institutions that constantly impinged on their lives... By making Black children the brunt of racist humor, the mainstream's effort to discourage African American education through segregation, inadequate funding, short school terms, and other measures was given additional impetus.

(Pgs. 233-234)

Although MacCann is specifically speaking about African American children, Chicana/os and Latinos have suffered similar inequitable and discriminatory practices. If the literature a non-Latina/o child is predominantly exposed only refers to how dirty, lazy and dumb Mexicans are, they will internalize that stereotype and not question it. For example, much of the general population has come to assume that Cinco de Mayo is Mexican Independence Day. As a child I remember discussing the grand fiesta our campus was going to have, we all learned the traditional folk song *De Colores* and had a great campus-wide celebration. My classmates and I never stopped to question what exactly the holiday represented or why we were all so engaged with this "holiday". We have to remember that schools and teachers are authority figures and children generally do not question authority and do view all that is taught as facts. This is a tremendous responsibility teachers must remember when selecting appropriate literature and history.

In the 1990's there was a sudden increase of Latino literature and authors being published. This brought to light a variety of options for Chicana/o children and parents. However, given the rising number of the Chicana/o Latina/o population there is still a lack of volume of books being produced and access to Chicana/o children's literature remains scarce. Early in 2014 The Cooperative Children's Book Center (CCBC) released

its annual statistics on the number of children's books by and about people of color published in the United States. Out of the 3,200 titles examined in 2013, it was found that only 57 books spotlighted Latino content, 93 books had significant African or African American content, 58 books presented substantial Asian/Pacific or Asian/Pacific American content, and 33 books contained topics related to American Indians. On December 4, 2012 the New York Times (website) ran an article titled *For Young Latino Readers, an Image Is Missing*. The article discussed how Latina/os still do not have a strong presence in the literary world. The article confirmed that “the Cooperative Children’s Book Center at the University of Wisconsin-Madison School of Education, which compiles statistics about the race of authors and characters in children’s books published each year, found that in 2011, just over 3 percent of the 3,400 books reviewed were written by or about Latinos, a proportion that has not changed much in a decade” (Rich, in press p. 1). As highlighted in the current 2014 statistic listed earlier, the numbers remain stagnant and consistent with the 2011 numbers. With the growing population of Latinos in this country it is imperative that one have the access and resources to acquire more books that do focus on Chicano/a’s in a positive aspect. Books such as *César: ¡Sí, Se Puede! Yes We Can!* by T. Bernier-Grand (2004) or *The Adventures of Connie and Diego* by Maria García (1987) are not readily available in the classrooms. Instead you will find the Curious George, the Dr. Seuss series or the Judy Blume collections at the children’s disposal. According to Mokoto Rich:

Books commonly read by elementary school children — those with human characters rather than talking animals or wizards — include the Junie B. Jones, Cam Jansen, Judy Moody, Stink and Big Nate series, all of which

feature a white protagonist. An occasional African-American, Asian or Hispanic character may pop up in a supporting role, but these books depict a predominantly white, suburban milieu (2012, p.1).

Given that you will more than likely be able to find books by Anglo authors more so than Latino authors simply reinforces the westernization of our educational system. However, what the article does not mention is how they are guilty of perpetuating the omission of Latina/o based books. On November 27, 2013 the New York Times released their list of notable children's book of 2013. You will find just about everything on that list from a picture book about the slave trade, a book on China's Boxer Rebellion, bullies and an opera attending bear. What you will not find are Latina/os. The list does not include a single book either penned by a Latina/o author or featuring a Latina/o protagonist.

### **Stereotypes in current and past children's books**

Chicana/o Latina/o children are still confronted with the stereotypical views of themselves. The book *Skippyjon Jones* by Judy Schachner (2003) is a perfect example of the overt racism that still plagues our children's literature. The story follows the heroic adventures of a white Siamese cat who believes he is a Chihuahua. Sounds innocent enough, however with all words ending in -ito this 2003 book series, completely butchers the Spanish language and actually encourages children to mock the "Mexican" accent. The abundance of Mexican stereotypes in this book is overwhelming:

Leaning toward Don Diego, El Skippito half sneezed, half spoke the secret password into the Chihuahua's very large ear. aaaaaAAAAAAAAAHHCHOOOOOOOOOO-PICHU! "Bless you" said Don Diego. "Gracias" said Skippito. "Then it is true" decreed Don Diego.

“Yip, Yippee, Yippito! It’s the end of Alfredo Buzzito! Skippito is here, we have nothing to fear. Adios to the bad Bumbleeto!” Then all of the Chimichangos went crazy loco. First they had a fiesta. Then they took a siesta. But after waking up, the Chimichangos got down to serious bees-nees. (Schachner 2003, pgs.14-18)

Along with the slaughter of a beautiful language there are depictions of the “Mexican” Chihuahua dogs eating only rice, beans, tacos and burritos. In addition to the series that composed of over 15 books and includes titles such as *Lost in Spice* (2009) and *Cirque de Olé* (2012), there is also an app for iPads, assorted toys and apparel sold through the Skippyjon Jones website (<http://www.skippyjonjones.com/>). So while there are various online debates<sup>1</sup> about whether or not this book is offensive, it does not appear that there will be an end to the mock-Spanish, taco and siesta loving crime fighting Chihuahua-cat anytime soon.

However, the depiction and reinforcement of stereotypes are nothing new. As illustrated in the 1944 book, *Angelo the Naughty One* by Helen Garrett is the story of a little Mexican boy named Angelo who despises baths. This books running theme depicts the longstanding and inaccurate “dirty Mexican” throughout the book. The main title character, Angelo, is constantly chastised for being dirty and disliking baths. He is immediately deemed as “naughty” because he dislikes baths. “For Angelo, the naughty one, was afraid of water. He was terribly afraid of it! And he was afraid of it because he

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<sup>1</sup> Opposing viewpoints can be found in the reviews of this book: ([http://www.amazon.com/Skippyjon-Jones-Judy-Schachner-ebook/dp/B00AEBCTEA/ref=sr\\_1\\_1?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1407684587&sr=1-1&keywords=skippyjon+jones](http://www.amazon.com/Skippyjon-Jones-Judy-Schachner-ebook/dp/B00AEBCTEA/ref=sr_1_1?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1407684587&sr=1-1&keywords=skippyjon+jones)). As well as various online blogs, such as: <http://decoloresreviews.blogspot.com/2013/04/skippyjon-jones-and-big-bones.html>, [http://nealpollack.com/archives/2009/04/skippyjon\\_racis.html](http://nealpollack.com/archives/2009/04/skippyjon_racis.html), <http://parenthropology.blogspot.com/2013/02/the-problema-with-skippyjon-jones.html>

hated baths. He hated baths worse than anything in the world” (1944, p.8) Garrett goes on to describe how the little boy eventually runs away to evade the baths and water that he is so fearful of. While on the run Angelo winds up being chased and captured by soldiers of the Mexican military. They proceed to say things like “You are so dirty we cannot see which Angelo you are” (1944, p. 20). Upon giving him a bath and cleaning him the soldiers states “What we have here, under all this dirt? I’ve begun to think it might be a little boy” (1944, p. 24). Once Angelo is cleaned he is returned to his family, there where they have all gathered for a wedding and suddenly now a clean Angelo is deemed the “brave one” (1944, p.39), “clean and shiny as an angel” (1944, p.36) and the “pride of the family” (1944 p. 38).

The edition being discussed is from 1970, this particular copy of Garrett’s book is illustrated by Leo Politi. The book is said to be set in a city, however Politi illustrations read more of a small Mexican town, not city scenes. All the patrons of the small town are dressed in traditional Mexican garb and every single Mexican stereotype once can mentally conjure up. The men all have large mustaches, sombreros, huaraches and the women are dressed in long skirts and shawls or serapes. Angelo is dressed in traditional Mexican peasant boy clothing. The only colors used are that of the Mexican flag, Red, White and Green. The running theme of the book is that Angelo is a dirty little Mexican boy, who is “a disgrace to the family” (1944, p. 32) and undeserving of any type of positive attention until his “dark face” (1944, p.18) is cleaned. The unworthy dirty Mexican stereotype is very strong in this book. Garrett’s disregard for any empathy towards Angelo when he is in a “dirty” state is appalling. Any child reading this can and will make the correlation that dirty equals shame and it is not until one is clean that one is

valuable. Chicano/a children will either internalize the reinforcement or as stated by Beck (2009):

When presented with under-informed books about Mexican-heritage life, Mexican-heritage children will likely see the slips and gaps in knowledge and therefore be less likely to engage in the text. Meanwhile, non-Latino students and teachers will not be presented with knowledge that could overturn their prejudices and give them reason to reach out to their Mexican-heritage classmates.

Therefore, the stereotype will hold as valid and both Chicano/Latino and non-Chicano/Latino children will not identify the negativity associated to the words. Unfortunately, this premise of the “dirty” Mexican and cleanliness equating to godliness is repeated again half a century later in the 1993 book *Carlos and the Squash Plant* by Jan Romero Stevens.

The other stereotype addressed in this book is that of Mexican poverty, unfortunately, “Mexican and Mexican-Americans are often portrayed as poor” (Schon, 1978 p.15). As in *Angelo the Naughty One*, the family lives in a village that depicts all the characteristics of village poverty. According to Schon the stereotypical characteristics of life in a small Mexican village include (1978):

There are innumerable books that show sandaled peasants with sombreros and sarapes that live in small Mexican villages. The stories usually describe barefoot children accompanied by a donkey, peasants going to a fiesta, and/or children too poor to afford a much-desired toy or thing.

In *Angelo the Naughty One*, all people (except the soldiers) are wearing sandals, there are donkeys in the plaza, the people/peasants are getting ready to head out to Angelo's sister's wedding (fiesta) and there are various people not wearing any shoes throughout the book.

However, the most poignant stereotypical illustration occurs on both pages 10 and 35 of this book. The scenes are those in which the entire "city" is represented. It demonstrates all the characteristics Schon described, donkeys, barefoot peasants, large sombreros, etc., however on two separate occasions on pages 10 and 35 is the now infamous and most disturbing image of the sleepy Mexican. On page 10 he can be found in the upper right hand corner and on page 35 he is located on the bottom right hand corner. The (now) icon is that of a sitting man dressed as a Mexican peasant barefoot, a sarape and pantaloons, and a massive sombrero that hides his face, as he reclines against the village church wall. This image has long been debated as being a symbol of the stereotype of Mexicans being lazy. Although some like Charles Phillip Jimenez, who authored the now out-of-print booklet *The Sleeping Mexican Phenomenon*, have attempted to reclaim and reinterpret the image as a positive portrayal, the historical precedents still stands as this image being incredibly insensitive and reinforcing of an inaccurate stereotype. Children who view this without explanation will come across this image again and again, and therefore the message will be remain the same, Mexicans are lazy.

The book's futile attempt to reinforce the ancient proverb of "cleanliness is next to godliness" is immediately lost in the shuffle of poverty, lazy and dirty Mexican stereotypes found. Regardless of when the books were written it is important to consider

that the reader may assume that the respective description of an ethnic character is representative of a substantial proportion of the selected population. As Isabel Schon has mentioned, “to promote feelings of respect and appreciation toward genuine Mexican and Mexican-American values and customs, the children must be made aware of the many stereotypes prevalent in books” (1978 p.15).

### **Impact of Representations on Racial Identity Development**

Identity development is critical for all individuals because it is during this process that they discover who they are and who they hope to become. Children are often regarded as being innocent and exempt processing their own opinions, ideas and identity. “The dominant conception of childhood innocence presumes that children exist in a space beyond, above, outside the political; we imagine them to be noncombatants whom we protect from the harsh realities of the adult world...” (Jenkins, p.2 1998). Child identity formation is indeed political and needs to be considered especially since their knowledge and understanding of themselves springs from a number of sources including, but not limited to, gender, social class, and ethnic group membership (Rosenthal, 1987). Ethnic identity pertains to how individuals interpret and understand their ethnicity, and, specifically, the degree to which they identify with their ethnic group (Phinney, 1996). The impact of ethnic identity is especially relevant in heterogeneous school environments and societies where minority groups and a dominant social group co-exist (Rosenthal, 1987). “With increased ethnic diversity, adolescents now interact across racial and ethnic lines in their communities and schools, making ethnic differences more visible and negotiating ethnic identity more complicated than once was true for those living in racial and ethnic enclaves” (Wakefield, W., & Hudley, C., 2007).

In 1993 Knight, G. P., Bernal, M. E., Garza, C. A., Cota, M. K., & Ocampo, K. A. developed a model that accounted for the influence of socialization experiences and children's cognitive abilities on ethnic identity development. According to their model, family background, family structure, and social environments influence the socialization in which children engage. Socialization agents can include family, teachers, peers, neighbors, and the media (Knight et al., 1993). Per the authors, children gain information and knowledge about their ethnicity via social learning experiences with their families, their respective communities, and the dominant society whom they interact. Given these connections and experiences, their ethnic identity develops and involves the ability to categorize and label oneself as a member of one's "ethnic group (ethnic self-identification), recognize behaviors, traits, and values that are relevant to one's ethnic group (ethnic knowledge), have positive feelings toward and preferences for ethnic group members, behaviors, customs, language, and values (ethnic feelings and preferences), understand that one's ethnic characteristics are permanent across time and settings (ethnic constancy), and engage in behaviors that reflect their cultural background (ethnic behaviors)" (Bernal, Knight, Garza, Ocampo, & Cota, 1990). According to Fox and Short (2004), every child reserves the right to see themselves positively and accurately portrayed in stories and to find truth based on their own experiences instead of negative stereotypes and misrepresentation. Therefore, because of the influential and authoritative agency provided to educators, they have a great deal of responsibility to expose Chicana/o children to material showcasing the contributions of and by the Chicana/o people.

Chicana/o children deserve better than what they are currently being provided. The Chicana/o community deserves more than this. This social injustice imposed on Chicana/o children is unreasonable and unacceptable. If all Chicana/o children are exposed to are white children going on adventures and historical stories of Europeans “they start thinking of their language or practices or familiar places and values as not belonging in school.” (Rich, 2012 p.2) If research is showing us that “education experts and teachers who work with large Latino populations say that the lack of familiar images could be an obstacle as young readers work to build stamina and deepen their understanding of story elements like character motivation” (Rich, 2012 p.1), then why are Chicana/o children still not being represented? Why are the children subjected to learning solely about the dominant culture? This is a question that has plagued me for years.

The chronic repetition of “why?” is what prompted me to take action and develop a book that Chicana/o children can relate to. The title of the book will be *Is Chicano a Type of Chicken? An Alphabet Book of Chicana/o History*. The book will be a pictorial historical text that will highlight key events and figures of Chicana/o history and more specifically the Chicano movement of the 1960s. This book will expose children to segments of history that traditional history books often overlook or distort. Thus, it will simplify and inform children (ages 6-9) about Chicana/o history, key figures and our civil rights.

Chicana/o children deserve to know the about their historical figures, social actions, and issues affecting their daily lives. They need to know and understand that they are not dirty, they do not talk funny, and they are not lazy. They deserve to know they have had (and continue to have) remarkable leaders that looked like them, talked like

them and felt the same way they do. They will know what it means to be a Chicana/o and, hopefully, feel the pride that comes with being a part of such a beautiful culture.

### **Is Chicano a type of Chicken?: Thesis Chapter Overview**

Chapter two will focus on establishing a theoretical framework, thorough review of the existing literature addressing the topics of multicultural children's literature, in particular that of Chicana/o children literature and how the effects of stereotypes, romanticization and problematic texts on child reading engagement and the positive affects culturally relevant literature can have on a child. Through a Critical Race Theory lens, I address the importance of race and racial identity in children, historically how Chicana/o characters have been portrayed and how white privilege dominated the narrative as well as (consciously or not) perpetuated stereotypes for the sake "entertainment". Chapter three discusses my methods and how the content analyses of the three selected books can be utilized to inform and educate Chicana/o Latina/o children about social movements and political actions relevant to their respective culture.

Chapter four will delve into the three specific books that will serve as my data set for this study. These books were selected based upon the relevance and portrayal of Chicana/o social movements and issues. As well taking into consideration the recommendation by The Council on Interracial Books for Children which indicates that one should take into account the author's perspective and background. The books selected are: *That's Not Fair! No Es Justo! Emma Tenayuca's Struggle for Justice* (Tafolla & Teneyuca, 2008), the story of a very young Chicana who helps and leads local pecan shellers in San Antonio, Texas during the 1920's in a fight for better working conditions. *Side by Side/Lado a Lado: The Story of Dolores Huerta and César Chávez*

(Brown, 2010), addresses the partnership between United Farm Worker leader Dolores Huerta and César Chávez. Lastly, *From North to South/Del Norte al Sur* (Colato-Lainez, 2010) discusses the very painful reality of immigration and deportation. The books are discussed in chronological order based upon when the social justice movements and social issues took place.

Chapter five will conclude my study and also discuss the importance of the culturally relevant material and why/how it works with the books selected. This chapter will also discuss the process of heroification to humanization in the books, as well as my own personal contribution. The (my) book *Is Chicano a Type of Chicken: An Alphabet Book of Chicana/o History* will be outlined and discussed. Lastly, this chapter will conclude with a brief discussion about the significance of the study and the important value of knowing ones history and empowerment of children.

## Chapter Two: A Review of the Literature

Chicana/o Latina/o and other children of color have a profoundly difficult task when it comes to developing a positive racial identity because they receive a conflicting message from society: All people are equal, but some people are more equal than others. In order to fully understand a negative and stereotypical depiction of Chicana/os/Latina/os, one must understand racism and how it is injected into our children's lives. The topic of race and racism is often approached with a "color-blind" positionality. However, as noted by the book *The First R: How Children Learn Racism* (Van Ausdale & Feagin 2001), in which various examples and research demonstrate that children in the U.S. are aware, at a very early age, of physical, cultural differences among people and racism. More specific (and relevant to this review) race and racism will be addressed as provided by Solórzano and Yosso (2001):

United States history reveals that race is a socially constructed category, created to differentiate racial groups, and to show the superiority or dominance of one race over another (Banks, 1995). Indeed, race can be viewed as an objective phenomenon until human beings provide the social meaning. The social meaning applied to race is based upon and justified by an ideology of racial superiority and white privilege. That ideology is called racism. Audre Lorde (1992) concisely defines racism as the —belief in the inherent superiority of one race over all others and thereby the right to dominance (p.496). Manning Marable (1992) also defined racism as —a system of ignorance, exploitation, and power used to oppress African-Americans, Latinos, Asian Americans, Pacific

Americans, American Indians and other people on the basis of ethnicity, culture, mannerisms, and color. (p. 5)

Race and racism are social constructs that have been rampant for many years and have affected the daily life of the minority. Racism has no prejudice against age, sex or identity. It is ever present from our mundane tasks to our daily rituals, it is there. Both covert and overt racism is also prevalent in our children's entertainment, from literature to television.

Nonetheless, some scholars and others have begun to address issues of race and racism through the development of Critical Race Theory (CRT).

CRT begins with a number of basic insights. One is that racism is normal, not aberrant, in American society. Because racism is an ingrained feature of our landscape, it looks ordinary and natural to persons in the culture. Formal equal opportunity—rules and laws that insist on treating blacks and whites (for example) alike—can thus remedy only the more extreme and shocking sorts of injustice, the ones that do stand out. Formal equality can do little about the business-as usual forms of racism that people of color confront every day and that account for much misery, alienation, and despair. (Delgado, 1995, p.xiv)

This description of CRT is important because issues of race and racism are highlighted and challenged by critical thinkers. Race is put at the forefront of all rules and regulations. Racism is evident and no longer ignored due to the work of those who have contributed in critiquing racism, not only in the law, but also in societal issues.

## Critical Race Theory

Critical Race Theory was selected as the primary theoretical framework for this literature analysis largely in part to the main principles set forth by critical race theorists Matsuda, Lawrence, Delgado, and Crenshaw (1993, p.6), which state that CRT is interdisciplinary, it acknowledges racism as both a de facto and de jure way of American life, it challenges ahistoricism and adopts a stance that presumes that racism has contributed to all contemporary manifestations of group advantage and disadvantage. When addressing literature and children's entertainment overall, it is important to keep the CRT principles in mind. The books selected challenge dominant ideology and the omission, neglect and/or dismissal of Chicana/o Latina/o themed literature is a product of racism and oppression. Whether or not the responsible party is mindful of it or not, one has to acknowledge that the dominant society can and will produce racist children's entertainment.

However, dominant society may not always be conscious of the negative images and/or literature they are producing. This is a result of "white privilege," as defined by Stephanie Wildman (1996) white supremacy and its ignorant privilege is:

The belief, and/or promotion of the belief, that white people are superior to people of other racial backgrounds. The term is sometimes used specifically to describe a political ideology that advocates the social, political, historical and/or industrial dominance by whites... *to people of color, who are the victims of racism/white supremacy, race is a filter through which they see the world. Whites do not look at the world through*

*this filter of racial awareness, even though they also comprise a race. This privilege to ignore their race gives whites a societal advantage distinct from any received from the existence of discriminatory racism. (p.87).*

Given the description by Wildman, it is easy to see how children's books and other media have perpetuated stereotypes and have even been rewarded for providing such "entertainment". However, the term can also be applied to establish the reiteration of negative Mexican stereotypes by authors, regardless of race.

In addition to blind racism, one must be aware of the other stereotypes that are produced by children's books. Educator Scott Beck (2009, p.2) explains the "critiques specifically relevant to Mexican-heritage in children's literature have been summarized by evaluating the works of Rosalinda Barrera and colleagues (1993, 1997, 1999), by Murray and Velázquez (1999), and Nilson (2005)." These authors have made it possible to compile a list of negative stereotypes and damaging misrepresentations about Mexican-heritage people to look out for in children's literature include. These include: families that seemingly accept their oppression, disproportionate numbers of dysfunctional families, the lack of English skills, Anglo-centricism that disparages the Mexican heritage, implied Anglo saviors needed for Latino success and over representation of protagonists as rural migrant farm workers (Beck 2009 p. 3). Although, when relevant to the context as in *César: ¡Sí, se puede! Yes, we can!* by Bernier-Grand (2004), the use of Mexican protagonists as farm laborers is one that is seen time and time again. Historically, Mexican families were not portrayed as being upper or even middle class. Mexicans as a whole are often portrayed in the barrio, farm or fields. The men are

often stereotyped as farmers, mechanics, and laborers, while the women are depicted as home-makers, seamstresses or teachers.

Over time there has been much advancement in the arena of Chicano/Latino children's literature. As documented by Nilsson (2005, p.539) when researchers Rocha and Dowd (1993) researched the questions, "are Mexican American females portrayed differently in books published from 1950 to 1969 versus those from 1970 to 1990? How are the females depicted? What stereotypes of the Mexican American culture are conveyed?" The summarized conclusion was that there was an "improvement since 1970, overall less stereotyping, a greater reflection of the current demographics. However, Mexican American females need to be portrayed more as leaders in homes, in professional positions, and in upper class neighborhoods. Books from 1970 to 1990 included portrayal of female characters with higher levels of education and positions of employment" (2005, p. 539). Rocha and Dowd's study only looked at the role of the female in literature; however some of their same conclusions can also be applied to Mexican male characters. Nilsson reports that Rocha and Dowd also observed (2005)

A need for greater portrayal of Mexican Americans' contemporary concerns and activities in traditional and nontraditional roles (e.g., lawyer, police officer, involvement in politics and religious activities). With respect to more recent literature published from 1990 to 1997 versus 1970 to 1990, Ramirez and Dowd (1997) found that characters did face more contemporary concerns, such as issues related to their bilingualism and immigration. However, what is surprising is that they also noted that the more recent books portrayed a more stereo typical view of females'

appearance in terms of traditional Mexican hairstyles and traditional Mexican dress than earlier publications. Female characters were depicted less often in educational contexts and employed outside of the home. (p.545)

Although the stereotypical storylines and gender roles in the literature appear to be improving, the issue with the more current publications is the illustrations. This appears to be a cultural overcompensation on behalf of the illustrator and author. Given that Ramirez, Rocha and Dowd have determined that the stereotypical roles of Chicana/os has decreased since 1950, one might even declare they are now being portrayed in more assimilated roles, the illustrations are what can visually demonstrate to the reader that although we are similar, we are still true to our roots.

### **Child “Entertainment”**

However, before children begin to read they are exposed to the entertaining world of television cartoons. This can very well be their first exposure to overt racism. The prime example can be found in the Warner Brothers *Merrie Melodies* cartoons. Blatant racism is portrayed by two of their caricatures who embody Mexican stereotypes in both Speedy Gonzales and his cousin Slow Poke Rodriguez. Every Saturday morning children sat around and watched as these two cartoon rats spoke in stereotypical “Mexican” accents and then proceeded to portray negative Mexican stereotypes: Lazy, dirty, gun toting, dumb, drunks, ladies’ man, and always running from the law. However, it is not until we take retrospective inventory of our childhood activities that we can properly

assess what was really passed off as child “entertainment”. William Anthony Nericcio (1996) describes his experience

As an English speaking child of Mexican descent living in Laredo, Texas, I laughed convulsively at the devil-may-care exploits of Speedy and his retinue of lazy shiftless cohorts, who are, in the words of the "Gringo *pussygato*," Sylvester, nothing but "miserable little sneakin' crooked cheese thieves" (*Here Today, Gone Tamale*, d. Friz Freleng, 1959). In *The Pied Piper of Guadalupe* (d. Friz Freleng, 1956), Sylvester adds more *predictable* abuse: "That's all you can do is run, run, run; you cowardly little cheese thieves."

"Predictable?"

Predictable in that it did not take a terrible stretch of the imagination by the mid-1950s for U.S. moviegoers to conjure the image of a Mexican as a thief—decades-long territorial disputes and wars with our southern *neighbor* helped ensure that this was the case. (p.204)

As a child Nericcio laughed off the overt racism being broadcasted over his television. However, a retrospective look at his childhood Saturday morning cartoon ignited a different feeling, not one of laughter, but of disbelief. Disbelief in the how quickly and easily a media giant like Warner Brothers could create this sneaky little Mexican mouse. This same white ignorant privilege has also been carried out into our children’s books.

A modern representation of racism in our children’s literature, one can again refer to the 2004 E.B. White Read Aloud Award by the Association of Booksellers for

Children winner and New York Times best seller, *Skippyjon Jones*. In which a white Siamese cat who is suffering from an identity crisis and believes he is a Chihuahua dog. He goes on to meet with other gang Chihuahua's the "Chimichangos" and in the end saves the day for the crew. The storyline is amateur and reminiscent of most other superhero tales, however the mock Spanish used throughout is the offensive element. With all words ending in -ito this 2003 book series by Judy Schachner, completely butchers the Spanish language and actually encourages children to mock the "Mexican" accent. Along with the slaughter of a beautiful language, the stereotypes also depicted are those of the "Mexican" Chihuahua dogs eating nothing but rice, beans, tacos and burritos. "Texts give the impression that Spanish speakers are united by a middle- and upper-middle class life of singing, dancing, fiestas, and baseball. A mass of harmful misinformation, the texts blend the world's roughly 400 million Spanish speakers into a sanitized, homogenous, carefree blob of generic Latin Americans" (Shedivy, 2007). This book as well as other forms of "entertainment" may be thought of as innocent and harmless, but they are not. They do not reflect the lived realities of children and certainly do not adhere to the solid guidelines set forth by the Council on Interracial Books for Children.

### **The Council on Interracial Books for Children**

The Council on Interracial Books for Children (CIBC), founded in 1965, was a product of the Civil Rights movement of the 1960's. According to one of the CIBC's longtime presidents, Beryle Banfield (1998)

From the very beginning, the writers, editors, educators, illustrators, and parents who created the Council were quite clear about its goals: "to

promote a literature for children that better reflects the realities of a multi-cultural society" and "to effect basic change in books and media." (Council vii). The tightly focused program developed by the CIBC over the years is derived from its commitment to the achievement of these specific goals. The newly created CIBC immediately began to address the issues of racism and sexism in children's literature. These had become critical issue for certain groups, including African Americans, who had been demanding accurate and adequate treatment of their life, history, and culture in children's literature and textbooks. Following the African American lead, other similarly affected groups-Asians, Latinos, Native Americans, and women-began to issue kindred demands.

As part of their said mission to reflect the realities of people of color in children's books the CIBC set forth the *Guidelines for Selecting Bias-Free Textbooks and Storybooks*. However, these guidelines appear to be open to interpretation and are not very strong in addressing the language and verbiage used in the books or television themselves. The council addresses "loaded words" such as "savage, primitive, conniving" but neglects derogatory words such as dirty, lazy or adding -ito to the end of a word to emphasize the Spanish accent. All of which reinforce negative stereotypes and encourage mocking; both of which can be very influential on a child's self-esteem and formulation of identity. However, having positive relatable images can also have an effect on a child's self-esteem, identity and connection to school.

While The Council on Interracial Books for Children guidelines were very well received and intended, they are in need of a more relevant update. Educators must

properly “identify racial stereotypes in professional settings, show their relationship to media stereotypes, and then examine how both are used to justify the unequal treatment of students of color” Solórzano and Yosso (2001). In the reported 2008 study by Gonzalez and Montaña, they set upon to do what Solórzano and Yosso described. Influenced by Ada and Campoy’s (2004) four phases of effective reading (descriptive stage, the personal interpretive stage, the critical multicultural or anti-bias stage, and finally the creative transformative) they were able to create a more effective method of analysis and selection of bias-free books. Gonzalez and Montaña (2008) had their students engage in the questioning process proposed by Ada and Campoy (2004) as well as their own set of questions; students shifted from the different set of four phases and queries, to ultimately create a deeper, more effective analysis of a text. Some of the questions asked by Gonzalez and Montaña (2008) included questioning of the authors background, analysis of the illustrations, consideration of the Chicano/Latino experience and historical perspective and inequalities amongst characters. The deeper engagement and questioning of the literature encouraged the student to really investigate the content of their selected book and then determine the level of bias. The phases proposed by Ada and Campoy (2004) combined with the questions provided by Gonzalez and Montaña (2008) in conjunction with the guidelines provided by the Council on Interracial Books for Children (1980), would not only create an efficient analysis of bias in children’s literature, but a valuable resource for educators and parents as well.

Gonzalez and Montaña also stated (2008), “when teachers incorporate multicultural texts they not only foster critical consciousness, but also simultaneously foster literacy development and further empower youth” (p.86). Re-affirmed by Ada

(2003), “books provide models for what children can do when faced with difficult life situations, the need to make moral decision, the necessity to make a choice or the opportunity to make their own decisions and thus create their own path” (p.10). Children have the potential to internalize what they are reading and utilize the content in their daily lives. Making that positive connection to the literature is crucial in their understanding of not only themselves, but their world around them. However, if all they are presented with are farm working, athletic, singing, dancing, fiesta-loving, siesta-taking images, then what will the children strive for?

### **Power of Literature**

Historically, one practice through which children learn and internalize cultural messages is the telling of traditional tales (Meyer & Bogdan, 1999). Children’s picture books are defined as picture books, picture story books, and illustrated books designed to be read by or to preschool children. A solid bias-free book can allow children to see their familiar culture and discover more about it. Murray and Velázquez (1999) emphasize the importance of literature:

Literature addresses the universal need for stories. Stories are most meaningful and best able to promote literacy when they speak to a student's world. Good books can help children develop pride in their ethnic identity, provide positive role models, develop knowledge about cultural history, and build self-esteem. However, Mexican American students in the United States often do not experience literature in this way.

(p.1)

Because of the negative portrayal and reinforcement of oversimplified stereotypes, Chicano/Latino children have found it difficult to relate to the protagonist. To paraphrase Kathy Escamilla, books and curriculum materials have tended to present Mexican-Americans in two extremes: super humans, who overcame insurmountable odds to achieve greatness or as helpless victims of poverty and discrimination, who largely reside in urban barrios or rural migrant camps (1992, p. 3). This polar depiction of a protagonist can create a feeling of insecurity for an average Chicano/Latino child who is not overcoming overwhelming obstacles, living in farming community or the urban barrio. The accurate depiction of Chicano/Latino characters is critical in the development of the children because the messages of the books are being received and may have a lasting effect on them.

Research has identified children's literature as a powerful and effective tool to "stir our emotions and create recognition of our collective humanity and of our potential to create history" (Furumoto, 2008, p.79). By reading stories about their own culture, children can find parallel life experiences and connections with the characters in the stories. This can encourage pride in their culture, allowing them to build a solid foundation of self-identity and affirmation. In addition to Chicano/Latino children making these powerful connections, other (non-Chicano/Latino) children can learn about the many variations of culture, like the celebrations, actions, and languages of the people (Ford, 2000). It is important for children to see a representation of all races, ethnicities, and cultures that are in society in order to form a true acceptance for all and an understanding of co-existence. Children should have the opportunity to be familiar with and value their own heritage and those of other people (Micklos, 1996). When presented

with under-informed books about Chicano/Latino life, “Mexican-heritage children will likely see the slips and gaps in knowledge and therefore be less likely to engage in the text. Meanwhile, non-Latino students and teachers will not be presented with knowledge that could overturn their prejudices and give them reason to reach out to their Mexican-heritage classmates” (Beck, 2009). Prejudices will not be challenged; therefore they will be reinforced and accepted by both Latinos and non-Latinos. The Chicano/Latino children will also not reap the benefits of making the connection between themselves and positive characters in books.

Furumoto (2008) describes the enthusiasm in which elementary students received the book *The Bakery Lady/La Señora de la Panaderia*. Not only did the students connect to the story, but so did the parents of the children. Furumoto’s student Martita described her experience with the mothers of the children as “the mothers in particular were eager to learn that there were more books in the library that welcomed their culture because they were not aware of this” (p. 91). Given that the book was a relatable book, unbiased or stereotypical, both the children and the mothers were more engaged in the material. Their attentiveness to the material created an eagerness to know more and therefore engaging the entire family, not just the children. Relatable subject matters foster interest and therefore create a niche in the literary world for the child.

According to the United States Census projections the Latina/o population is expected to more than double, from 53.3 million in 2012 to 128.8 million in 2060 (2012). Consequently, by the end of the period, nearly one in three U.S. residents would be Hispanic, up from about one in six today. With this rise in numbers, it is critical now more than ever that our children have access to quality un-biased, stereotype free

literature. However, even after the “little boom of the 1990’s” (Ada, 2003 p.46) in which there was a significant rise in the amount of Chicano/Latino literature being published by both Latino and non-Latino writers, there still remains a gap. On December 4, 2012 the New York Times (website) presented an article titled *For Young Latino Readers, an Image Is Missing*. This indicates that still in today’s society with the number of both the Latino population and the amount of Chicano/Latino writers growing, there still remains a gap. The article quotes Mariana Souto-Manning, an associate professor at Columbia University’s Teachers College, “if all they read is Judy Blume or characters in the “Magic Treehouse” series who are white and go on adventures, they start thinking of their language or practices or familiar places and values as not belonging in school.” (2012, p.2)

In addition to the feelings of ostracism, the children struggle to find a sense of normalcy in their dominant culture classrooms.

At Bayard Taylor Elementary in Philadelphia, a school where three-quarters of the students are Latino, Kimberly Blake, a third-grade bilingual teacher, said she struggles to find books about Latino children that are “about normal, everyday people.” The few that are available tend to focus on stereotypes of migrant workers or on special holidays. “Our students look the way they look every single day of the year,” Ms. Blake said, “not just on Cinco de Mayo or Puerto Rican Day.” (2012, p.2)

The “struggle” described by teacher Kimberly Blake, is both sad and frightening. Why is it so difficult to find Chicano/Latino characters that are not the “token” friend, but just

any other person? At the conclusion of the article, Latina author Julia Alvarez, is quoted as saying “it should be as natural reading about these characters as white characters” (2012 p.3) and indeed she is correct. Chicano/Latino children are often viewed as “exotic” and therefore different, when in reality they may share some of the same interests as their dominant culture counterparts. However with books such as *Skippy Jonjones* doing so well on the market, it is easy for one to see how Latinos are still viewed as the “other.”

However, not all books being published are full of stereotypes. As stated in Nilson’s work; Nieto discovered, improvements in the children's literature base can happen slowly, and measurable progress may take more than a decade (2005). If authors are adhering to the guidelines set forth by the Council on Interracial Books for Children along with their own set of moral questions, such as those presented by Ada and Gonzales and Montaña, then an effective can be (and has been) written. In reviewing the works of Furumoto (2008), Gonzales and Montaña, Nathenson-Mejía and Escamilla (2003) one can compile a generous list of acceptable and relevant children’s books. Books such as: *The Bakery Lady / La Señora de la Panadería* (Mora, 2001) *Pepita Talks Twice* (Dumas Lachtman, 1995), *Too Many Tamales* (Soto, 1996), *The Adventures of Connie and Diego* (García, 1987) and *Mi Nombre es María Isabel/My Name is María Isabel* (Ada, 1993) all not only adhere to the various guidelines presented by the various researchers but they all possess a great positive, effective, and relatable subject matter for Chicano/Latino children.

While many of the studies and literature discussed focuses on children’s narrative or fantasy literature, not much is presented in respect to historical texts. There is a

tremendous gap in the world of Chicano children's literature in terms of their history as Chicanos. Chicano history is something that is not usually addressed until the child reaches their teens. At which time they may explore it in high school, but even then the resources are scant. Most Chicano youths do not learn their true history until they reach college. My proposed book titled, *Is Chicano a type of Chicken?* would not only follow the guidelines set forth by the Council on Interracial Books for Children, but also take into consideration the questions proposed by Ada and Compoy (2004). This book will be a pictorial historical text that will simplify the Chicana/o Movement for children (ages 6-9) as well inform them of their history. Chicano children deserve to know the truth about their people. They need to know and understand that they are not dirty, they do not talk funny, and they are not lazy. They deserve to know the truth, they have had remarkable leaders that looked, talked and felt the same way they do.

### **Chapter Three: Methods**

The primary function this study serves is working toward a deeper understanding of how Chicana/o social movements are conveyed and depicted in children's books. The major focus of this content analysis study is the ability to identify children's literature that offers a critical perspective of these lived experiences, which include culture and representation. Such knowledge will ultimately help children learn the important role Chicana/os played (and continue to play) in social justice movements while offering the opportunity for children to learn a side of history that is often omitted or presented in a manner that may lead to tokenization and tinge the child's knowledge with misconception and/or negative stereotyping.

Children's picture books represent a multifaceted form of dialogue involving text and pictures. Content analysis is a means of examining both the text and the illustrations found within this medium. Busha and Harter (1980) reinforced this research technique as a comprehensive way of evaluating content in literature:

The selection and analysis of information, situations, characters, or elements in a communication can indicate pertinent features such as comprehensiveness of coverage or the intentions, biases, prejudices, and oversights of authors, publishers, creators, or other persons responsible for the content of materials (p. 171).

Within this context, especially with the representation of history in books for children, if inaccurate, the books can potentially lead to misunderstanding and/or an oppressive and stereotyped view of history. In this thesis, the method of content analysis was utilized to

examine in-depth three picture books to ascertain the level of authenticity, accuracy, and to tell the stories of key players and social actions pertaining to Chicana/os.

Content analysis is one of the most commonly used research tools in media and communications. It may be used for different types of research problems in various disciplines, including documenting and measuring verbal behavior such as people or characters in films and television programs in complete dialogue, deliberations between characters in books, or the way “heroes” are written about in biographies. Wright (1986) describes content analysis as:

A research technique for the systematic classification and description of communication content according to certain usually predetermined categories. It may involve quantitative or qualitative analysis, or both. Technical objectivity requires that the categories of classification and analysis be clearly and operationally defined so that other researchers can follow them reliably. (p. 125)

Additionally, he notes that it is important to remember: content analysis itself provides no direct data about the nature of the communicator, audience, or effects. Therefore, great caution must be exercised whenever this technique is used for any purpose other than the classification, description and analysis of the manifest content of the communication. (Wright 1986, p. 126)

Krippendorff (2004) defines content analysis as “a research technique for making replicable and valid inferences from texts (or other meaningful matter) to the contexts of their use” (p.18). Additionally, he asserts that as a research technique, content analysis

provides new insights, strengthens a researcher's understanding of a particular phenomenon, or informs practical actions. Content analysis may (but does not have to) involve constructing categories, sampling, collecting data, analyzing data, coding data and interpreting data. Holsti (1969) advocates that each step in the research process be carried out according to formulated rules and procedures. The process culminates in theoretically relevant findings that answer a research question, not just provide a list of information about content. Although definitions of content analysis vary, most of them include the use of methodical sampling and classification. Berger (2000) also comments that there are a number of advantages to content analysis, one of which is that it is inconspicuous and relatively inexpensive. It makes use of material that is easy to obtain and work with and can be about current events and topics of present-day interest. In short, Berger states a content analysis "analyzes the content of something" (p.173).

Due to the fact that this study is also guided by the foundations of Critical Race Theory the thesis included aspects of critical ethnography and was a blend of objective content analysis and subjective inferences. Briefly speaking, ethnography refers to systematic study of people and cultures. It is usually the result of an extended observation of a group, typically through participant observation or interviews with members of the group to study meanings of behavior, language, and interactions of a culture-sharing group (Stewart, 1998). The description of people and their culture and its purpose is to develop insights into a specific culture, and provide a description and interpretation of a cultural or social group or system (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994). While this study was not based on an examination of actual live individuals, per se, the exploration of cultural content representative of Chicana/o social justice movements qualifies the characteristics

of an ethnographic approach. According to Stewart (1998), ethnography is used to generate insight, and this research sought to provide insight into the way Chicana/o cultural historical content is woven into a selection of published picture books.

Altheide (1996) suggests “several aspects of an ethnographic approach can be applied to content analysis to produce ethnographic content analysis.” (p. 65). According to Altheide, ethnographic content analysis (ECA) is an approach that is a blend of “objective content analysis with participant observation to form ethnographic content analysis” (p. 2). Altheide also points out that although the documents, which for this thesis are picture books, exist independently and are not connected to the researcher, the meaning and significance of them depends on the researcher’s focus. The “researcher’s eyes and question” transform the information in the documents into data (p.2).

## **Terms Defined**

### **Biohistoria**

Gloria Anzaldúa coined the revolutionary literary term “autohistoria”. She defined it as a way to “describe women-of-color interventions into and transformations of traditional western autobiographical forms. Deeply infused with personal and cultural meaning... autohistoria is informed by a reflective self-awareness employed in the service of social justice work” (Anzaldúa & Keating, 2009, p.319). Because autohistoria “focuses on the personal life story but, as the autohistorian tells her own life story, she simultaneously tells the life stories of others” (Anzaldúa & Keating, 2009, p.319). Due to the personal story and connection to the tale of Emma Tenayuca, I’d like to propose that the authors were engaging in what I will call Biohistoria.

Working with the same themes as those outlined by Anzaldúa a biohistoria is defined as one that focuses on the personal life story of another individual whose personal reflective self-awareness employed and fueled their social-justice service. Biohistoria is also steeped with biographer's personal and cultural attachment to said subject. Lastly, it is a way for women-of-color to honor, intervene and transform traditional western biographical forms of storytelling. In other words, the same principles defined by Anzaldúa for autohistoria are now being made applicable to that of a biographer.

### **Heroificaton**

Loewen describes the concept of heroificaton as "a degenerative process (much like calcification) that makes people over into heroes. Through this process, our educational media turn flesh-and-blood individuals into pious, perfect creatures without conflicts, pain, credibility, or human interest" (2008, p.11). He discusses the danger in this "as authors leave out the warts, the problems, the unfortunate character traits, and the mistaken ideas, they reduce heroes from dramatic men and women to melodramatic stick figures. Their inner struggles disappear and they become goody-goody, not merely good" (Loewen 2008, p.29).

The extreme "hero" presentation can be more harmful than good, for it poses a hero/victim binary. As Kathy Escamilla iterates:

The dichotomy of heroes and victims produces a distorted account of the Mexican American experience. Perpetuating stereotypes of Mexican-Americans is harmful to all students in a classroom, but poses special

dangers to students of Mexican-American heritage. The view that only the exceptional succeed, while the majority fall victim – combined with the sporadic and inaccurate treatment of the contributions of Mexican Americans in the curriculum- may lead students to conclude that if they are not truly exceptional (and most of us are not!), there is no hope for them, unless they reject their heritage and “act white.” Further, students may be misled to conclude that their heritage has contributed very little to the development of the Western Hemisphere (1996 p.276)

Our society already methodically omits, degrades and silences the migrant experience, for example, as well as the history and contributions of Mexican Americans. If we are then informing children that only certain special people can change social problems, then we are doing them a disservice.

### **Exceptionalism**

Exceptionalism as derived from Bickford & Rich 2014:

Exceptionalism emerges when a historical figure completed a historically accurate, extraordinary, yet anomalous action and is portrayed as representative of a larger demographic (Bickford, 2013a; Williams, 2009). While Harriet Tubman’s exploits on the Underground Railroad and Rosa Parks’ refusal to cede her seat are historically accurate, Tubman is not historically representative of a typical female slave (Genovese, 1972) and Parks’ choices and actions that single day are not historically representative of her work in the civil rights movement (Theoharis, 2013). Tubman and

Parks should each be celebrated, but as successful anomalies. When *only* their stories are told, children generate unrealistic impressions of slavery and the civil rights movement because countless slaves and civil rights workers never achieved what Tubman and Parks did. All female slaves did not gain their freedom. The vast majority lived under the literal whip of slavery and died under its metaphorical yoke. Similarly, African-Americans did not suddenly gain social acceptance after one lady chose to sit in the front of the bus (p.68).

While they are speaking in terms of Rosa Parks and the Civil Rights Movement, the concept parallels that of what is being conveyed in regards to César Chávez and Dolores Huerta in *Side by Side* by Monica Brown.

### **Humanization**

Paulo Freire (1970), avoids a specific definition of what it is to be human, however, he describes the process by which people become more fully human as humanization. “Within history, in concrete, objective contexts, both humanization and dehumanization are possibilities for a person as an uncompleted being conscious of their incompleteness” (p.43). Meaning that, as cognizant, historical presences, humans face the task of humanizing themselves and others. Freire determines this as the particular burden of the oppressed class, since those who do the oppressing are not able to give freedom and humanization to themselves or others. Instead of describing a state of being fully human, Freire defines a process of humanization that is fundamentally a process of moving away from dehumanizing oppression. Freire comes closest to concretely defining the work of humanization when he writes:

But while both humanization and dehumanization are real alternatives, only the first is the people's vocation. This vocation is constantly negated, yet it is affirmed by that very negation. It is thwarted by injustice, exploitation, oppression, and the violence of the oppressors: it is affirmed by the yearning of the oppressed for freedom and justice, and by their struggle to recover their lost humanity. (p.44)

Therefore, for the purpose of this thesis, humanization will refer to the struggle to be recognized as fully human; the lack of faults, overarching goodness and single-handed achievements leaving the reader unable to identify with the protagonist due to their lack of relatable characteristics. A romanticized or idealized hero may be didactically more effective, but a humanized hero shown struggling to align his or her day-to-day conduct and actions with his/her professed beliefs and leadership roles has more complexity, connection and relevance.

### **Sample Selection**

A purposive sample was drawn from three children's books focusing on Chicana/o social movements and issues: *Side by Side/Lado a Lado: The Story of Dolores Huerta and César Chávez* (Brown, 2010), *From North to South/Del Norte al Sur* (Colato-Lainez, 2010) and *That's Not Fair/No Es Justo!: Emma Tenayuca's Struggle for Justice/La lucha de Emma Tenayuca por la justicia* (Tafolla & Teneyuca, 2008). While this is a limited sample, these books all carry very positive and powerful themes that directly relate to Chicana/o social justice movements. They also depict some of the lesser known struggles (for example the pecan shellers strike) that are part of Chicana/o history.

One noticeable difference is the selection of the book *From North to South* that does not deal with a particular movement, per se. However, it does deal with the larger human aspect of the lived reality of immigration, which presently is part of a national civil rights movement. Drawing from the principles of content analysis, ECA, the four phases of effective reading proposed by Ada and Campoy (2004) combined with the questions provided by Gonzalez and Montañó (2008) in conjunction with the guidelines set by the Council on Interracial Books for Children (1980) all assisted in developing the series of questions utilized for the assessment.

The sample of children's picture books that portray Chicana/o social movements were selected using the general following criteria:

1. The historical and/or social movement story line content
2. The book was a children's picture book written for children in the 4-8 age range.
3. Chicana/o protagonists.

One of the overarching frames of analysis was humanization and heroification. The structure of the analysis is as follows: (1) summarize the book, (2) Analyze author/illustrator [to identify potential sources of bias], (3) provide context for any missing historical information (e.g., given issues of white privilege). In the historical analysis, I will include biographical information that is important for children to identify with the exemplary contributions of Chicana/o/Mexican-American protagonists. Within/throughout the analyses, gender portrayals are also examined. Given the gender imbalance in children's literature with "only about half the number of female characters as there are males" (Browne, 2013) and because gender is so salient for young children

(Hilliard, L., & Liben, L. 2010) it is important to examine how female and male protagonists are portrayed. Strengths in the books' illustrations and narrative, (such as biohistoria, migrant worker song, humanization/authentic, yet painful realities) that have the potential to increase ethnic pride are also examined.

The content data was based on the following:

### **Author**

1. Author's background/research
2. Does the author have an "insider" perspective?
3. Does the author have an informed "outsider" perspective about the Chicana/o experience &/or literary styles?
4. Is the story about the author's life, research of a racial/ethnic group, or based on any background knowledge?

### **Storyline/History**

1. What is the history of the social movement the book describes?
2. Are there any specific heroes that exhibit exceptionalism<sup>2</sup>
3. Is the history and/or social movement accurately described?
4. Does the story have a realistic or relatable ending?
5. Are the protagonists celebrated as historical figures?

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<sup>2</sup> Exceptionalism as described by Bickford, 2013 & Williams 2009

## **Illustrations**

1. What qualifies the author or illustrator to deal with the subject? If they are not a member of the group they are depicting, is there anything in their background that would specifically recommend them as creators of the book?
2. Are the characters in the illustrations all illustrated the same except the tint of their skin? Are faces of minority racial characters stereotypically alike?
3. Do the illustrations depict minority racial characters in subservient and passive roles or in leadership and action roles?

## **Overall Themes and Messages**

1. What is the overall theme of the book?
2. Is the message in the book/story that an individual's determination or hard work is ALL one needs to succeed?
3. Is the message in the book/story that children just need to have good self-esteem to defy/overcome stereotypes?
4. Is the depiction of the historical/social movement addressed at an appropriate level for the age/grade levels?
5. Is the main character so exceptional (e.g., a token minority) that he/she does not resemble an individual's typical experience/reality?
6. Do we develop sympathy for characters or are we moved to action or advocacy to address injustices?

7. How are the women portrayed?

All of these questions were utilized as my guides for the ethnographic content analysis conducted of the selected children's books.

### **Limitations**

This study is not intended to be an overarching view of all Chicana/o children's literature. The sample of three books could serve as a possible analytical model for others engaged in reading or writing culturally based children's book(s). Another limitation is the books selected were specific to children ages 4-8. This was done purposefully knowing and understanding the importance of child ethnic identity development. The findings and data analysis are to inform the colloquy surrounding the portrayal of Chicana/o social movements and what is being conveyed to children.

## Chapter Four: Findings

This chapter reviews the themes, historical data missing, gender roles portrayed and concepts of heroification and humanization present in the three specific books that served as my data set for this study. These books were selected based upon the relevance and portrayal of Chicana/o social movements, figures and issues. Other items taken into consideration reflect the recommendation by The Council on Interracial Books for Children which indicates that one should take into account the author and illustrator's perspective and background. The table below shows a brief synopsis each books respective theme and data collected.

<b>Themes present</b>	<b>From North to South</b>	<b>Side By Side</b>	<b>It's Not Fair!</b>
History Missing	-N/A Book is not historical.	-UFW's anti-immigrant tactics -Family abandonment -Filipino activists roles -Criticism Huerta received for being mother and activist -Ubiquitous coverage of Chávez in comparison to the minimal coverage of Huerta. -Historical inaccuracy boycott and march to Delano	- Emma Tenayuca's ostracism from San Antonio, Texas -Communist ties -Marriage -Prior arrests -Regional only coverage. Story of Emma is not widely known outside of Texas. -Precursor to other labor movements to follow
Gender Roles Portrayed	-Mother is away and cannot tend to home -Father is incapable of cooking (burns tortillas) -Women form collective at Casa	-Huerta is equal to Chávez -Chávez is man of action with hunger strike -Huerta is the voice who continues to do his work	-Emma is an independent woman and thinker. -Emma is not portrayed as a damsel in distress -Emma is ahead of her time, a feminist.

	Assunta		
Heroification	-There are no heroes in this story. -No happy ending	-Huerta and Chávez are the exclusive leaders of a movement. -Persistence leads to victory. -Everything is happy and solved by Huerta and Chávez	-Emma is seen as the sole leader and strictly on persistence was able to lead thousands to a happy ending. -She is seen as the only negotiator with the factory owners. -Happy ending
Humanization	-The story humanizes the protagonist, a young boy, by telling the story from his perspective and his experiences of his mother's deportation. -The immigrant struggle is human and not statistical.	-Huerta and Chavez are seen as children; the storyline depicts how they were raised and the impact this has on who they become as adults.	-As a child Emma is compassionate and strives to help others. This theme runs throughout the text. The conditions of the pecan shellers and other poor people are depicted in ways which tend to humanize them.

***That's Not Fair /No Es Justo!: Emma Tenayuca's Struggle for Justice/La lucha de Emma Tenayuca por la justicia***

The book, *That's Not Fair!/No Es Justo!: Emma Tenayuca's Struggle for Justice/La lucha de Emma Tenayuca por la justicia* (Tafolla & Teneyuca 2008) tells the true story of notable labor organizer and social activist Emma Tenayuca. This bilingual children's book begins with her childhood in San Antonio, Texas and depicts how she was influenced to become one of the most prominent social leaders in Chicana/o Latina/o history by seeing the everyday injustices against Mexican-Americans. The story concludes with the 1938 depiction of Tenayuca leading over 11,000 workers in the historic pecan shellers (nueceros) strike. Historians regard this as the first successful

large-scale act in the Mexican-American struggle for civil rights and justice. It was “the largest labor strike in San Antonio history and the most massive community-based strike waged by the nation’s Mexican Americans in the 1930s” (Vargas, 2007 p.123). This chapter will provide a full description of *That's Not Fair!/No Es Justo!: Emma Tenayuca's Struggle for Justice/La lucha de Emma Tenayuca por la justicia*, followed by author and illustrator information as well as a discussion of the historical and political upheaval missing from the storyline which led to Tenayuca’s rise to heroism. As well as a brief biography of Emma Tenayuca, and concludes with the data analysis of the text, depictions and importance of access to historical feminist figures.

In 2008 Dr. Carmen Tafolla along with Emma Tenayuca’s niece, Sharyll Teneyuca<sup>3</sup> published *That's Not Fair! Emma Tenayuca's Struggle for Justice (No es justo!: La Lucha de Emma Tenayuca Por la Justicia)*. Accompanied by illustrator Terry Ybañez, the bilingual children’s book traces the trajectory of the passion for righteousness by a young Emma Tenayuca. The book provides a vivid depiction of the early injustices encountered by a young Emma Tenayuca during the 1920’s and 1930’s in San Antonio, Texas. With the early influence of her grandfather Emma learns to care deeply about reading, teaching, and action during a time when many people were starving to death and working unreasonably long hours at slave wages. Through beautiful illustrations the story tells of a young girl’s quest to make her city a better place to live, learn, and work.

The story of *That's Not Fair! Emma Tenayuca's Struggle for Justice* begins in 1925 with a young Emma walking to school and passing a small shack where a mother is

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<sup>3</sup> Sharyll Teneyuca has clarified that “Teneyuca” is the family surname's original spelling

trying to soothe her cold and hungry baby. She also encounters hungry children eating pecans as their only meal. She is instantly upset and her “eyes flashed” (Tafolla, Teneyuca 2008, p. 3). The flashing of the eyes is utilized throughout the story to indicate a heightened awareness. Emma’s story continues as she gets to school and her scholastic achievement is emphasized by the teacher’s enthusiasm for receiving a new book to read. Emma is eager to embark on the adventure her new book will lead her to, however she is interrupted by a neighbor girl, Maria, who expresses curiosity but then admits she cannot read. Maria begins to describe her plight as a child laborer in the farms and how her busy seasonal schedule did not allow for her to progress in school. Again, Emma’s eyes are described as “flashing” and she utters the theme and idiom of the book, “That’s not fair” (2008, p. 8).

Moving forward the immense bond between Emma and her grandfather is depicted when she is portrayed walking with him through a park. Based upon the biographical information on Ms. Tenayuca one is lead to assume that this is La Plaza del Zacate. While at the park she and her grandfather see a family in need of food. The father of the family describes a terrible (yet not uncommon) ordeal in which he was not paid for his work in the fields. Again, Emma’s eyes “flash” and the phrase “that’s not fair” (2008 p.15) is said. The story continues with her and her grandfather discussing various instances of injustices seen throughout their city of San Antonio. This includes the wealth binary prevalent in the city of rich and poor homes and establishments side by side. During the walk, Emma and her father come upon a man singing the legendary migrant worker song, *El Sol Que Tú Eres* (The Sun That You Are). Upon returning Emma begins to concoct ways in which she can possibly assist the several injustices she observed. She

begins with delivering a shawl to the cold baby, an apple from her own lunch to the children who were previously only eating nuts and continues her justice quest by teaching Maria how to read. The last injustice of the unpaid farm worker is portrayed as the catalyst for Emma's most triumphant achievement, the pecan shellers strike.

The year is 1938 and Emma is now 21 years old and is described as a person whose eyes "flash" when speaking with a voice "full of courage and caring" (2008 p.30). The story continues with Emma rallying the Nueceros and encouraging them to strike against the unfair wages and work environment. With the support of "12,000" pecan shellers all leaving their respective factories the owners were forced to negotiate and raise the wages, all with the leadership of Emma Tenayuca. The tale concludes with a happy ending by describing the victory, "the story of the pecan shellers appeared in newspapers all across the country. Those who had been powerless had won against unfairness. People everywhere celebrated. The poor loved Emma for what she had done. She had given them a voice and given them hope. Tomorrow would be brighter for everyone. And that, at last, was fair" (2008 p.38). Following the conclusion of the story there is a mini biography with photographs of Emma Tenayuca.

### **Authors and Illustrator**

Because the book was written by Emma's own niece, Sharyll Teneyuca, the story has a familial air about it. Although in a November 2001 column for the San Antonio newspaper *La Voz de Esperanza* <sup>4</sup> Sharyll admits that her aunt was never "discussed." Instead, due to her political activism, the topic of her Aunt Emma was taboo in the

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<sup>4</sup> Translation: The voice of hope

family. “I read with awe that ‘Emma Tenayuca was the charismatic leader of a movement that shook the city’s labor force,’ a ‘fiery orator’ who’d been involved in organizing and fighting for the rights of the city’s poor and against some of the city’s most profitable industries... I was both proud and impressed to finally learn the family secret about Aunt Emma” (2001 p.6). Upon this initial unveiling of her Aunt Emma, she began to research her aunt more, for it was “that newspaper article, finally ending the years of family secrecy on the subject, that planted in me the seeds of longing for the rest of the story” (2001 p. 6). This provided her with an insider perspective that allowed her to engage with the material on a deeper more authentic level. She met author Carmen Tafolla at a dinner in which she discovered Tafolla had met Emma Tenayuca in the 1960’s. They struck up a friendship and partnership that led them to bring the story of Emma Tenayuca to the masses. Sharyll Soto Teneyuca is both an attorney and an author. Her publisher’s biography states that she is “a graduate of Rice University and New York University School of Law and was voted Outstanding Young Lawyer by the San Antonio Young Lawyers Association in 1985 for her work as the founder and director of the Pro Bono Law Project, the first volunteer attorney assistance project for the representation of indigents in civil matters in Bexar County” (“Wingpress” n.d.). The co-author Dr. Carmen Tafolla is an internationally renowned author of more than twenty books and is also a very highly anthologized Latina writer. The illustrator of the book is a painter and printmaker Terry Ybañez, a fellow Chicana, who has worked with the likes of Sandra Cisneros and Alma Flor Ada (“Wingpress” n.d.). She along with Dr. Tafolla and Ms. Teneyuca is also a San Antonio, Texas resident. Linking each of the women involved

genuinely to Emma Tenayuca not only in relation, but in roots proves to be a strong connection that showcases each individual's personal attachment to this book.

The illustrations provided by Terry Ybañez are eloquent and thought provoking. The characters to appear to be depicted in a series brown/white poor/rich powerless/powerful binaries that are indicative of the time period(s) in which the story takes place. However, these binaries are inadvertently reinforced by the color of the characters skin further along in the tale. In the beginning of the tale Emma appears as a young nine year-old girl with beautifully tanned skin, rosy cheeks and pink lips. All of her classmates, the disenfranchised family with the hungry children, the singing man in the park, the pecan shellers, and her friend Maria are all depicted in the same manner. There are various shades of brown utilized in the depictions of the Chicana/o Latina/o characters. Her teacher is illustrated with much lighter skin, as to indicate that she is possibly Anglo. Because the teacher is encouraging of Emma's brilliance and provides her with a new book, she is viewed as an ally. The other lead character, her grandfather, is also represented with brown skin. However, there are some instances in which the characters who are disenfranchised, such as the family with six children in park (2008 p. 14) and the man singing (2008 p.23) are a few shades darker than Emma and her grandfather. Lastly, towards the end of the story when Emma is an adult and leading the nueceros, her shade appears to be slightly lighter than it was as a young girl. One may assume that because Emma is in a power position as union leader she is now depicted as a lighter version, as to indicate one must be lighter to lead. While I do not believe that the illustrator intentionally painted Emma in two different shades, one darker than the other, there is something to be noted about the shift. Especially given the color caste system and

colorism that has been prevalent in Chicana/o Latina/o history (Organista, K., Chávez-Dueñas, N., & Adames, H., 2014).

### **Nueceros**

In 1938 San Antonio nueceros revolted against poor living and working conditions of the pecan shelling factories. As illustrated in the book when Tenayuca describes the social class binary of seeing some “people going into dark, dreary factories to shell pecans. Some entered elegant buildings” (Tafolla p. 20) Mexican-Americans found themselves excluded from the Anglo social mainstream, socially and financially. According to Menefee and Cassmore (1940) the pecan shelling industry employed more workers than any other industry in San Antonio during the Depression. When migratory work ended for the winter, West Side shelling plants and homes swelled with thousands of nueceros. Accordingly, pecan shelling played a major role in the lives of Tejanos. Nueceros endured tedious, arduous work and miserable sweat-shop like working conditions in an attempt to provide for their families' needs. They were also paid dismal wages.

In the 1930s Texas pecans accounted for approximately 50 percent of the nation's production. San Antonio was the Texas shelling center because half the commercial Texas pecans grew within a 250-mile radius of the city. Women made up over 90 percent of the poorly paid nuecero population. “A Mexican family earned five to six cents per pound of shelled pecans and averaged \$1 to \$4 for a fifty-one-hour workweek, or \$192 annually, the lowest wages in the nation” (Vargas, 2007 p.134). The Pecan Shellers Strike, according to the Texas State Historical Association handbook of Texas, was:

...one of the lowest-paid industries in the United States, with a typical wage ranging between two and three dollars a week. In the nearly 400 shelling factories in San Antonio the contracting system was prevalent; the large firms controlled the supply of nuts as well as the prices for shelling. Working conditions were abysmal-illumination was poor, inside toilets and washbowls were nonexistent, and ventilation was inadequate. Fine brown dust from the pecans permeated the air, and the high tuberculosis rate of San Antonio-148 deaths for each 100,000 persons, compared to the national average of fifty-four-was blamed at least partially on the dust. The Southern Pecan Shelling Company, owned by Julius Seligmann, shelled one-fourth to one-third of the nation's entire crop and dominated the San Antonio market. The company had begun in San Antonio in 1926. Before that year machines had cracked and graded the nuts; the separation of the meats from the shells was the only operation performed by hand. The Southern Pecan Shelling Company replaced all machines with hand shelling, cracking, and shaking (2010).

The hand labor allowed for price control and higher profit margins for the company and owners. When the wages of the nueceros was dropped to barely \$2 per week or three cents per hour of work, the workers felt defeated. At this time Emma Tenayuca headed the Workers Alliance in San Antonio where she participated and led the pecan shellers strike (Filewood, 1994 p.22).

San Antonio officials strongly opposed the strike. "More than 700 arrests were made. Picketing of the 400 factories was complicated by police actions. In one week in

February, 90 male pecan shellers were arrested and imprisoned with 200 other prisoners in a county facility designed to hold 60. The strike received national and international attention because of the mass arrests” (Croxdale, 2010). Among those arrested was Tenayuca (Vargas, 2007). Eventually by 1939 most of the company presidents and the Local 172 agreed to arbitration. An initial settlement of seven and eight cents was increased when Congress passed the Fair Labor Standards Act of 1938, which established a minimum wage of twenty-five cents an hour. Concerned that the minimum-wage law would encourage mechanization of the industry in Texas and thereby displace thousands of shellers, the Congress of Industrial Organizations joined with the employers' association in seeking an exemption of pecan workers from provisions of the Fair Labor Standards Act. The Department of Labor, however, denied the exemption, and over the next three years cracking machines replaced more than 10,000 shellers in San Antonio shops (Coxdale, 2010; Vargas, 2007; Filwood, 1994).

### *La Pasionera*

La Pasionera (The Passionate One) is how Carmen Tafolla described Emma Tenayuca during her eulogy on July 27, 1999. Tafolla’s poem began with:

La Pasionaria we called her,

bloom of passion,

because she was our passion

because she was our corazón—

defendiendo a los pobres<sup>5</sup>,

speaking out at a time when neither Mexicans nor women were expected to speak out at all.

But there she was—

Raising up her fist for justice, raising up her voice for truth (Gender on the Borderlands: The Frontiers Reader (Kindle Location 3109). Kindle Edition)

Labor leader Emma Tenayuca was born on December 21, 1916. She was the eldest of eleven children who was raised by her maternal grandparents in San Antonio, Texas. It was here that Emma forged a bond with her grandfather that would have a profound effect on her quest for social justice. In an interview conducted by Jerry Poyo she describes the great influence her grandfather had on her life. She describes the relationship with her grandfather (1987):

And there was one place here where I used to go, particularly with my grandfather, and I went with my father quite a few times, and that was La Plaza del Zacate. Remember, when you went there, when you went to the plaza, what did you see? Did a man come there alone, by himself, on Sundays? No, he brought his family. How were these kids dressed? You'd see them with overalls; sometimes they had shoes, sometimes they were barefooted. I would just go barefooted when I was a kid. So, they were different; different from us. And then, you began to notice those things.

Then, well, my grandfather...I don't know whether he read Spanish, but he

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<sup>5</sup> Defending the poor

certainly read English. Well, he would always get the newspaper...the whole family took an interest in politics.

She continues describing a time in which her grandfather confided in only her that he had lost money during the stock market crash that led to the Depression; “I loved my grandfather very, very much. In 1929, the Wall Street crash; in 1932, the closing of all the banks... My grandfather lost some money in one of them, and he didn’t tell anybody. He came over to me and told me, he says, “I’ve lost everything I have.” And he was already about, I guess, 65, close to 70. So, I don’t know, I felt that had an awful effect on me” (Tenayuca, 1987).

Perhaps best known for her activities leading to the 1938 San Antonio Pecan Shellers strike, La Pasionaria, started her labor organizing at age 16 when she joined the Finck Cigar Company strike. The strike was made up largely of the Mexican-American women of San Antonio. In 1933 “several hundred San Antonio women cigar workers walked out of the Finck Cigar Company, demanding increased pay, better working conditions, and union recognition” (Vargas, 2007 p.127). Because of her activities as a chief organizer of the Finck Strike she was arrested. The following year, Tenayuca also helped organize the strike against Dorothy Frocks (an infant and children’s clothing company) when Mexican women garment workers were also subjected to poor working environments and treated disrespectfully. As her political awareness grew, so did Emma’s reputation as a strong woman and activist. She would often hear, “Here comes the little girl who confronts men” when walking down the streets (Vargas, 2007 p. 128).

Tenayuca saw first-hand the injustices committed against Mexican Americans and Mexicans living in Texas. This and her marriage to Homer Brooks is what prompted her to join the Communist Party. “According to Tenayuca, she joined the party because no one but the communists expressed the least interest in helping San Antonio’s disposed Mexicans” (Vargas, 2007 p.123). In 1939 Tenayuca and the Texas Communist Party were scheduled to meet in the municipal auditorium. Tenayuca was also scheduled to speak at the meeting. Various San Antonio organizations such as The Ku Klux Klan, the Elks, and the Catholic Church condemned the city mayor and demanded that he retract the permit. When the mayor refused thousands protested outside. Eventually, the crowd outside became rowdy and began hurling rocks and bricks at the building. Inside, police officers guided the Communist Party members through a tunnel extending from the auditorium to the San Antonio River. They got out just in time, for the crowd broke through the police barrier and vandalized the curtains and seats of the auditorium. This is what is now known in San Antonio history as The Municipal Auditorium Riot (Vargas, 2007; Tenayuca, 1987).

Due to the riot, her involvement with the Communist Party and activism aspects of Tenayuca's public, political and private life were put under tremendous scrutiny. She received death threats and found it impossible to secure employment in San Antonio. She was ultimately blacklisted by the local community. She moved first to Houston, Texas but later settled in San Francisco, California. Tenayuca never worked again as a labor organizer. In 1941, she divorced her husband Homer Brooks and focused on education. She earned a Bachelor’s degree from San Francisco State University and became a reading teacher in 1952. After twenty years Emma returned to San Antonio and in 1968

she earned a Master's degree from Our Lady of the Lake University. She retired from teaching in 1982. During the last decades of her life, she became popular among Chicana and Chicano activists and scholars who found inspiration in her previous work. "I couldn't get a job, I couldn't help, and I couldn't do anything, so I left San Antonio. I went to San Francisco and stayed there for twenty years, and to my surprise, I return and I find myself some sort of a heroine" (Tenayuca, 1987). Sadly, the brilliant mind of Emma Tenayuca succumbed to Alzheimer's disease and she passed away on July 23, 1999. Her passion for justice and equality is one that continues to inspire activists, feminist and all seekers of social justice.

### **Biohistoria**

Teneyuca and Tafolla engage in biohistoria by telling the story of Emma Tenayuca in a personal yet relatable manner. The tale of Emma Tenayuca begins with her quest for social justice at a very young age. As biohistorians Teneyuca and Tafolla go beyond the scope of simple storytelling, they engage the reader in two decade's worth of cultural connection of the subject (Emma Tenayuca) to that of the various causes. Through biohistoria Teneyuca and Tafolla utilize Emma Tenayuca's personal memoirs, history, storytelling, myth and combine it with culturally relevant events of poverty, unions, feminism, strikes and injustices to formulate a tale that can support children's learning, healing, and connection. Specifically, Tafolla and Teneyuca write (2008):

Years passed, and Emma grew into a smart, kind, teenager. All around her there was hunger, misery and poverty. And the poorest of all the workers were the pecan shellers. Many were only paid four cents for their best hour

of work. Most of them were Mexican-American. Most were women. Some were children. Emma began to speak to others about things that were not fair. She spoke in public parks and in the market where the farmers sold their vegetables. She even spoke on the steps of city hall! When she spoke to the people, her dark eyes flashed and her voice was full of courage and caring. The people listened, and her words touched their hearts, sparking hope as bright as lightning in a dark sky. (p.30)

This excerpt along with the “flashing of eyes” that is stated throughout the book highlights the biohistorian’s effort to showcase the self-awareness Emma Tenayuca possessed. She would utilize this introspection to help others and endure the arduous task of advocating social-justice.

Another example of biohistoria utilized by Tafolla and Teneyuca is in the constant connection Emma has to her grandfather and the Mexican-American people. Walking through La Plaza del Zacate and familiarizing herself with the issues of her people. The story of her neighbor Maria not knowing how to read because she is the child of travelling laborers, Emma’s encounter with the poor children and her constant cries of “that’s not fair” all of which fall in line with the concepts of what it means to bring forth a biohistoria.

### **Diversity of the Chicana/o Latina/o experience**

There are several key dynamics that occur in the story of Emma Tenayuca; the author’s inclusion of the migrant worker song, *El Sol Que Tú Eres* (The Sun That You Are), the authenticity of the tale, the reflection of the diversity of the Chicana/o Latina/o

experience and lastly the use of a female heroine. These elements are key points highlighted by the CIBC and Gonzalez and Montaña (2008) when reviewing children's multicultural literature.

Teneyuca and Tafolla's inclusion of the song *El Sol Que Tú Eres* is very powerful and telling of the author's consciousness in writing this tale for children. However, the accuracy regarding if this song was sung by the migrant workers in the 1920's remains ambivalent. According to Linda Ronstadt, who popularized the song in her album *Canciones de mi Padre* (My Father's Songs), her website (<http://www.ronstadt-linda.com/cancione.htm>) she states:

This exquisite ballad is in the public domain and relatively unknown. Don Rubén guessed that it might be very old, perhaps a hundred years or so. I first sang it with Danny Valdez in *Corridos*, a P.B.S. production directed by his brother Luis. Danny said that he learned it on the picket line with Teatro Campesino, helping to organize the farm workers with César Chávez (n.d.)

What is known is that migrant workers did (and continues to) utilize music as a coping tool. This is evident by the popular Teatro Campesino Ms. Ronstadt mentions in her quote as well as with modern day studies. In 2010 Schwantes, M. and McKinney, C. published a study in which they explored the effects of music therapy on depression, anxiety, and perceived wellness in Mexican migrant farmworkers. The results indicated that the music therapy significantly lowered the mean level of depression (2010). The inclusion of this song in telling Emma Tenayuca's story to children is important because

of the dialogue that can follow. When Emma is discussing the various ways in which even little things can help soothe everyday injustices, she indicates, “by singing a song with the right words to make people understand” (2008, p. 25) she denotes the importance of music. The lyrics selected are also serves as foreshadowing the working conditions that Emma would later fight against.

The authenticity of the tale and the reflection of the diversity of the Chicana/o/Latina/o experience are fairly precise in the sense that it depicts a struggle in which change occurred by the collective action of the masses. Because the book is written by an insider, Emma’s niece, and based upon various historical documents as well as narrative provided by Emma Tenayuca herself, the authenticity of the tale is strong. The various generations reflected in the story and the multiple types of families also serve to depict the diversity of the Chicana/o Latina/o experience. This is especially evident in her relationship with her grandfather and his enormous influence. While one might argue that Emma’s success is due to her relationship and dependence on a man and therefore falls into the pit of the traditional role of the woman, which would be inaccurate. Emma’s grandfather was by her own admission a pivotal figure in her teachings, activism and (unknowingly to her) heroism. Including her grandfather’s role also adds to the humanization of Emma, her family, and the nueceros by relaying how family members can influence and provide direction to us about our potential as actors on the stage of history.

Emma as a hero in the story is very powerful. Stories embodying female experiences are important because of the roles and opportunities afforded the sexes in western society. Therefore, having a powerful female lead that is not restricted to gender

norms of motherhood and complacency is not only refreshing, but important. Not only can young girls benefit from knowing they had a great leader, but also adults. Labor activism and labor radicals built a historical legacy for the future generations of Chicana feminists. The implication that there was not an Anglo savior required for Emma to succeed can be very influential for any young Chicana. However, the notion that she single handedly led the nueceros to victory can be misleading and may lead to the glorification and heroification of Ms. Tenayuca as opposed to the humanization of a strong woman. Indeed by making clear that no strike or social movement can succeed without the support of large numbers of people is critical information to convey to children and people of all ages. Humanization, in particular, calls attention to the false egos of leaders that imagine they can instill in the masses the “right” direction. Instead humanization calls for leaders to work alongside people to support their growing awareness of their lived experiences, problematizing their conditions, and figuring out collectively and in dialogue about how to address their realities (Freire, 1970).

In the book she is seen as being the chosen one and the leader of the masses:

She spoke to the owners, begging them to think of the workers. One owner laughed. “What does it matter they are Mexicans!” Emma knew that was not fair. When the pecan shellers asked for her help, she knew what to do. “You must all stop working until the owners listen to you,” said Emma. “We will make a soup kitchen to feed your families. If we all help each other, we can win.” “No one will listen to you!” But 12,000 pecan shellers listened. The factories were almost empty (Tafolla, Teneyuca, 2008 pgs. 35-37).

The book goes on to describe how “Emma would not stop fighting for justice” (p.37) and eventually she and the *nueceros* were victorious. However, what is not specified in the text or in the appendix to the text is who exactly is Emma referring to when she says “we”? Emma was a leader in the Workers Alliance of San Antonio and certainly they could have assisted. What the authors have done is created an almost mythical person who strictly on persistence was able to lead thousands to a happy ending. Throughout the text Emma is portrayed as a seeker of social justice and a genuinely concerned good person without flaws.

For continuity and length purposes Ms. Tenayuca’s association with the communist party, multiple arrests and ostracism from San Antonio were not mentioned. However, the authors could have provided some of this information in the appendix or could have easily worked in the arrests in the transition from Emma speaking at city hall to the 1938 events (pgs.30-33). It is important that our protagonists be seen as human because as Loewen (2008) states “who our heroes are and whether they are presented in a way that makes them lifelike, hence usable as role models, could have a significant bearing on our conduct in the world” (p.30).

While Tenayuca and Tafolla have made a great contribution to Chicana history, the history is almost isolated to the San Antonio, Texas region. Tenayuca is celebrated and immortalized by murals throughout the city as well as hailed as a one of the first labor organizers. While achieving these feats is a tremendous victory, her story is not one that is often heard of in other states. As evidenced by the number of biographies, state holiday and most recently star-studded Hollywood movie, most labor struggle attention goes to the plight of César Chávez and the United Farm Workers.

Emma Tenayuca was a true pioneer of her time. She lobbied for things we as a modern society take for granted such as unions, social security, fair wages, and safe working environments to name a few. Most importantly she paved the way for all future Chicana/o leaders to come. She was outspoken and passionate about her causes. She set the standard for César Chávez and Dolores Huerta. Emma was a feminist before the popularization of the term. She was our first tried and true leader. Her full and true story needs to be told, and told loudly.

*¡Si, Se Puede! Yes, we can!- Dolores Huerta*

***Side by Side/Lado a Lado***

*Side by Side: the Story of Dolores Huerta and César Chávez/Lado a lado: la historia de Dolores Huerta y César Chávez* by Monica Brown, (2010) This bilingual picture book pairs the dual stories of influential activists César Chávez and Dolores Huerta. Side by Side begins by briefly chronicling the backgrounds of Huerta and Chávez and how they eventually came to meet and become activists and collaborators. Their stories unfold within the facing pages of the book, side by side. This section will discuss the depth and analysis of the story as well as author Monica Brown. It will also delve into the subjects of Huerta and Chávez, their powerful partnership and the important yet problematic concept of heroification in Chicana/o Latina/o children's literature.

Side by Side is an age appropriate written and illustrated book. This picture-book biography in Spanish and English tells the story as they fought for farm workers' rights. This picture-book biography in Spanish and English tells the story as they fought for farm workers' rights. Unlike most texts, this book brings Huerta's role to the foreground, shedding new light on the history of the UFW movement in the United States. Narratives of historical events such as this one have traditionally focused on male leaders and often neglected the role that many women have played in the struggle for social justice. The story begins with Huerta learning about activism and taking care of others at a young age, especially the migrant farm workers. Her mother was one of her biggest influences and states "From her mother Dolores learned to think of others. When poor farmworker families had no place to sleep, Dolores's mother would let them stay at her hotel for free"

(2010, p. 5). She would later teach the hungry, thirsty and barefoot children of migrant farm workers. On the very next page (placed side by side) the book describes how as a young boy, Chávez learned from personal experience the hardship of being a migrant farm worker, having to drop out of school and work with his family in the farm under difficult working conditions. “Life for César’s family was difficult. All day bent over in the hot sun picking lettuce, strawberries, and grapes. There was never enough water to drink out in the fields” (2010, p. 6). The placement of the two stories next to each other shows the difference in how the two were raised. Huerta came from privilege, joining the girl scouts and later becoming a teacher, while Chávez came from a poor migrant family and was subjected to child labor. This binary of disenfranchised and enfranchised is each shown on a double-page spread, with Huerta’s story on the left, and Chávez’s on the right-hand side.

The book describes how after individually addressing injustices, the two met and agreed to work together for better living and working conditions for farm employees. They organized the workers and urged them to fight for justice. Dolores and César convinced people to boycott grapes from California because growers utilized pesticides that made the workers sick. “The people listened, and the grapes rotted on the vines” (p.13). This led to workers getting safer working conditions, and the grapes were also healthier for people to consume. On the following page, the 1966 march to Sacramento from Delano is depicted in the book. It shows how they were involved with a “340-mile march” (2010, p.15) to demand better living wages for workers. As the book states “they arrived on April 10, Dolores' birthday. Dolores gave an amazing speech, and the people were heard! The growers signed a contract with the workers, giving them better pay for

their hard work. It was time for the farmworkers to share in the harvest!” (2010 p.15). This portion conveys to the reader that the workers won their battle, which ultimately resulted in their pay increase due to their perseverance and passion. However, this section is historically inaccurate. The book mentions that Dolores and César asked people to protest dangerous pesticides by boycotting grapes, and that as a result; the farmworkers won a healthier work environment. However, the UFW.org timeline states that first there was an organized strike and then a boycott followed. Also, the strike was not originally about the pesticides, it was to support the farm workers to obtain contracts with growers ([http://ufw.org/\\_page.php?menu=research&inc=history/03.html](http://ufw.org/_page.php?menu=research&inc=history/03.html)). The next page talks about the 340-mile march as a protest against low wages. But the march happened during, not after, the boycott, and the boycott and grape pickers' strike continued for years after the famous march to Delano. While this book is intended for 4-8 year olds, the simplification and definitiveness of everything being happy and solved by the end is misleading.

The story continues by stating that while Dolores and César did not have much money, and they both had families of their own to feed, they believed in their cause and did everything they could to help those that needed help. They wanted to make the lives of workers better. Side by Side also discusses how Chávez went on a hunger strike for 36 days to demand better working conditions for the people. Huerta is depicted as the galvanizer of the workers who led them to believe that change was possible. Their support for the passing of the Immigration Act of 1986 (that helped immigrants become U.S. citizens) is also portrayed. The book concludes by showing how for thirty years, Dolores and César worked together up until his untimely death in 1993. However,

Dolores continued working for the betterment of the people. There is an appendix to this book specifically for teachers and parents. It discusses the social movements of the strikes and the march to Sacramento and the Immigration act of 1986 in a little more detail. The little bit of extra information can assist the reader in addressing any questions raised.

The book alternately talks about César Chávez's and Dolores Huerta's accomplishments, which is revolutionary in terms of United Farm Workers of America (UFW) hero coverage. In fact, the book does an exceptional job to provide as much equal coverage of both Chávez and Huerta, mentioning their names 22 times each throughout the text. However, in history women's accomplishments are often forgotten or tucked behind those of their male colleagues. That has been the case for Dolores Huerta, co-founder with the late César Chávez of the UFW. "Chávez, the union's charismatic president until his death in 1993, has been credited with organizing the union and its nationwide grape boycotts to win better pay and conditions for farm workers. But her admirers believe the credit should be shared with Huerta, the union's first vice president since its founding in 1962" (Genasci, 1995). Due to the abundant literature, documentaries and even a Hollywood movie based on the life of César Chávez, this thesis will only briefly discuss Chávez with more of the focus on the contributions of, life of and portrayal of Dolores Huerta in the book *Side by Side*.

### **Author & Illustrator**

Author Monica Brown is a Peruvian American writer who is also a professor of English at Northern Arizona University, specializing in U.S. Latino Literature and

Multicultural Literature. She has won several awards including Américas Award for Children's Literature and an Orbis Pictus Honor for Outstanding Nonfiction. Monica Brown's website discusses her passion behind her writing, "I write from a place of deep passion, joy, and commitment to producing the highest possible quality of literature for children. In my biographies, the lives of my subjects are so interesting and transformational that I am simply giving them voice for a young audience. I don't think it is ever too early to introduce children to the concepts of magical realism, social justice, and dreaming big!" (<http://www.monicabrown.net/about/>)

In a 2013 interview with NPR, author, Monica Brown briefly discussed the book *Side by Side*:

It's actually pretty amazing because if you look at one of the spreads where I write when César grew up, he and his friends were hurt by dangerous tools and had mean bosses who sprayed the plants with poisons that made the farm workers sick. And those - to have that image in a children's book is important because it's part of our history.

However, it should be noted that when Brown answered this question she only spoke in terms of César Chávez. The interviewer, Arun Rath, had focused solely on him by stating, "You know, you mentioned topics that make people uncomfortable. You've done some marvelous illustrated biographies of important figures...One, though, I was noticing was César Chávez. You have to deal with injustice and difficult things. And I imagine that would be something that would be hard to pitch as a kid's book" (2013). Again, there was no mention of Dolores Huerta by either party. So while Brown's book is

exceptionally cognizant of making equals of Huerta and Chávez, this is unfortunately not the case in this particular interview.

Illustrator and public speaker Joe Cepeda received his BFA in illustration from California State University, Long Beach in 1992. He is a Southern California native who began his illustration education at East Los Angeles Community College. Upon graduating he gathered what little earnings he had and went to New York City where he went to various publishing houses to show his portfolio. With a “stroke of luck” (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ExxVgkZeX0o>) he was able to secure a deal with Putnam publishing. Cepeda has published over twenty children’s books and is a recipient of the Pura Belpre Honor Award (Colato Laínez, 2010 book jacket). His personal connection and dedication to the Chicana/o Latina/o community has made him a well sought after illustrator. Cepeda’s vibrant paintings help pull together the narrative and reinforce the personality of the main characters. His work on both *Side by Side* and *North to South* demonstrate Cepeda's remarkable ability to bring in a balance of light and depth when illustrating difficult subjects for children.

### **Dolores & César**

Dolores Huerta was born Dolores Clara Fernandez. Her dedication to the improvement of the lives of farm workers and to organizing people has spanned more than forty years. Born in Dawson, New Mexico, on April 10, 1930, she was the only daughter of three children. Her mother and father divorced early in Dolores's life. After her parents' divorce, her mother moved Dolores and her two brothers to Stockton, California. Her working mother and maternal grandfather raised her. Following the

conventional pattern for women of her generation Dolores married at the age of twenty in 1950. After her marriage she continued her education and earned a teaching credential from Stockton College. By 1955, she was a mother of three children and became involved with the Community Service Organization (CSO) in Stockton. The CSO was a grassroots organization founded in 1948 by Fred Ross with funds from Saul Alinsky's Industrial Areas Foundation. Focusing on making Mexicans politically active, the CSO worked toward voter registration and community issues affecting Mexicans. Through political and civil activism, the CSO tried to bring Mexicans into American mainstream (<http://doloreshuerta.org/dolores-huerta/>).

During this time César Chávez was serving as the National Executive Director of the CSO, and, at the same time, he was becoming progressively frustrated with that organization. His goal was to create a true union for farm workers, one that would represent a social movement for justice in the fields. He envisioned himself not as a traditional union boss but as a volunteer in the fight for justice for all farm workers. He approached the CSO with his idea but was unable to obtain the organization's support. He resigned from the CSO and asked Dolores to join him in Delano to help organize the new union. He knew she would be a committed volunteer in the fight for pay equity and safety in the fields for men, women, and their unborn children. Dolores says that her first reaction was "When César told me, 'I'm going to start my own union', I was just appalled, and the thought was so overwhelming. But when the initial shock wore off, I thought it was exciting" (Levy, 1975 at p. 147). It was then that Huerta and Chávez not only formed their partnership, but also the organization that would eventually become the United Farm Workers (UFW).

Meanwhile in Huerta's personal life she had divorced her first husband and later married Ventura Huerta and had five more children. As a woman, Dolores felt pressure from her family, church and society, to assume the role of the "traditional" wife and mother. However, it was difficult for her to not be actively involved in the work that was so important to her. She said, "I made my husband Ventura quit his job to work. My brother also quit his job and worked full time without pay to organize the union. But Father McCullough didn't want me to be involved. He said that farm labor organizing was no place for a woman. So I kind of worked under cover, doing the work through my husband and my brother" (Levy, 2007 at p. 284). Her working "under cover" may account for her minimized role in history.

This was a challenging time for Dolores and her family and her marriage felt the strain. Dolores traveled frequently while organizing and lobbying and her children were often cared for by other union families. She noted that, "It was difficult for us, to work for nothing, because I was having a baby every year. They were hard times! In fact, it ended up in a divorce" (Levy, 2007 at p. 145). Her mother helped her financially and in caring for the children, but Dolores had to deal with the disapproval of relatives and others who didn't understand her commitment to helping the farm workers. She said,

I had a lot of doubts to begin with, but I had to act in spite of my conflict between my family and my commitment. My biggest problem was not to feel guilty about it. I don't any more but then, everybody used to lay these guilt trips on me, about what a bad mother I was, neglecting my children. I had six and one on the way when I started—and I was driving around Stockton with all those little babies in the car, the different diaper changes

for each one. It's always hard, not just because you're a woman but because it's hard to really make that commitment. It's in your own head. I'm sure my own life was better because of my involvement. I was able to go through a lot of very serious personal problems and survive them because I had something else to think about. Otherwise, I might have gotten engulfed in my difficulties and I think, I probably would have gone under ..." (Baer & Matthews, 1974 p. 233).

This powerful statement shows the dedication that Dolores had to the cause of the farm workers. She was able to shun all social conventions to remain true to the struggle and the fight of those who could not fight for themselves.

While Huerta was considered an assistant to UFW leader, César Chávez, and her organizing talents were often diminished to simple social work. Looking closer, it was not Chávez, but Huerta who succeeded in the most important labors of the union: negotiating contracts. "Huerta's service to the union, was nontraditional. As a cofounder of the union with César Chávez, and as first vice-president, Huerta has held a decision-making post in the UFW from the outset She was also the union's first contract negotiator, founding the negotiations department and directing it in the early years" (Rose, 1990 p.28). Mexican women who participated in men's activities have been seen as unassuming; as a result they have acted in both male and female roles. Because Huerta had numerous children, and was a Mexican woman, the male grape growers and their legal counsel frequently thought her harmless. However, she was also an assertive and dominant leader. She created her own niche in which she explored her forceful leadership skills and maintained her femaleness simultaneously.

Women ultimately underrate and undermine males as competent power brokers, yet these very women invoke the culture's gender-based norms to sustain their power. In this sense, a mother's gendered behavior strategically violates the binary male/female opposition by creating a third agency which identifies with neither sex (the ideal Mexican mother, after all, is asexual) but which in the guise of the maternal dissimulates as gender-appropriate behavior (Del Castillo, 1998, p.215)

With more and more women rising to leadership positions, readers of *Side by Side* may not realize the importance of having a woman in a power position. More importantly young readers are being communicated from an early age that a female in a protagonist role is equal to her male counterpart.

Union leader and labor organizer César Chávez was born Césario Estrada Chávez on March 31, 1927, near Yuma, Arizona. Chávez dedicated his life to improving the treatment, pay and working conditions for farm workers. He knew all too well the hardships farm workers faced. As depicted in *Side By Side*, when he was young, Chávez and his family toiled in the fields as migrant farm workers. In 1948 César married Helen Fabela. They settled in Delano and started their family. First Fernando, then Sylvia, then Linda, and five more children were to follow. In 1962 César founded the National Farm Workers Association, later to become the United Farm Workers (UFW.org). A major turning point came in September 1965 when the fledgling Farm Workers Association voted to join a strike that had been initiated by Filipino farm workers in Delano's grape fields. Chávez's drawing on the imagery of the civil rights movement, his insistence on nonviolence, his reliance on volunteers and religious organizations, his alliance with

organized labor, and his use of mass mobilizing techniques brought the grape strike and consumer boycott into the national consciousness. The boycott in particular was responsible for pressuring the growers to recognize the United Farm Workers. The first contracts were signed in 1966, but were followed by more years of strife. (Chávez, 2007 & UFW.org).

## **Heroism**

While the book *Side by Side* does a great job of providing equal coverage for both protagonists, it is also guilty of exceptionalism, heroification and unrealistic expectations. Rothenberg writes: “Like so many consumer products, fruits and vegetables appear before us as if by magic. . . . Few people realize that virtually every vegetable or piece of fruit we eat was handpicked by a farmworker, a member of our nation’s poorest and most disadvantaged class of laborers” (xiii).

While *Side by Side* does have the greatest of intentions it does fall under the gap of exceptionalism and heroification. Heroification “manifests in literature when a lone person seemingly single-handedly transforms history or receives entirely more acclaim than is deserved” (Bickford & Rich, 2014 p.69) this has traditionally been the case with the triumphs of César Chávez. While *Side by Side* does include Dolores Huerta, the omission of just how much their families and other assisted in the strikes makes for a slight misrepresentation. Children need to know and understand that they too can make a difference. They need to view people like Dolores Huerta and César Chávez as role models and not anomalies.

By falling victim to hero-worship of those whom we honor, we do a disservice to them, ourselves and those we seek to inspire. While it may not flow with the structure of the text to mention Cesar Chavez's anti-immigrant sentiment and his liberal use of the word "wetback" (<https://diva.sfsu.edu/collections/sfbatv/bundles/189746>), it would behoove the reader to inform themselves and the audience that not everybody is perfect and we all make mistakes. If we fail to recognize them as human then we negate our own capability of going on to do great things to help others. Kohl and Edelman (2007), have also pointed out, overemphasizing one hero leads children to overlook many others whose achievements deserve attention as well. That is already the case with Dolores Huerta and César Chávez. He has a state holiday recognized in California, Colorado and Texas, Huerta does not. Chávez is often credited with the UFW slogan of "Si Se Puede" when in fact it was Huerta who coined the term. *Side by Side* does reflect that achievement (p.20).

Today at the age of 83 Huerta continues to "work tirelessly developing leaders and advocating for the working poor, women, and children" (<http://doloreshuerta.org/dhf-history/>). Through her organization, The Dolores Huerta Foundation, she and her staff "create networks of healthy, organized communities pursuing social justice through systemic and structural transformation" (<http://doloreshuerta.org/dhf-history/>). One of their current endeavors is the "Border Kids Relief Project" which aims to build awareness and support for organizations providing child refugee relief in Texas, California and other locations. So while Huerta continues to do the work she began over 40 years ago, it appears that now her star is beginning to shine as bright as that of Chávez. Flaws and all,

both activists and their achievements need to reach all children. *Side by Side* by Monica Brown is a great way to begin the discourse.

*From North to South*

“El Hielo<sup>6</sup> anda suelto por esas calles

Nunca se sabe cuando nos va tocar

Ahora los niños lloran a la salida

Lloran al ver que no llegará mamá

Uno se queda aquí, otro se queda allá,

Eso pasa por salir a trabajar”<sup>7</sup>

-El Hielo ICE by La Santa Cecilia (2013)

*From North to South/Del Norte al Sur* (2010) discusses the very real and painful truth about immigration, deportation and the family left to deal with their new reality. Author René Colato Laínez tells the story of a child, José, and his relationship with his mother who has been deported back to Mexico. Given the anti-immigrant sentiment and legislation that has transpired over the past twenty years, *From North to South* delves into the stories not very often told; those of the children affected and loved ones left behind. This section will discuss in depth the analysis of the story, the author, as well as the various state and federal policies that have led to the current anti-immigrant sentiment which inspired this book. Lastly, this section will address the influence and importance of

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<sup>6</sup> Translation Hielo: ice. ICE in this song is referring to the government Immigrations and Customs Enforcement (ICE) agency.

<sup>7</sup> Translation (my own): ICE is loose over those streets. We never know when it will be our turn. They cry, the children cry at the doorway. They cry when they see that their mother will not return. One stays here the other stays over there. That's what happens when you go to work.

stories that reflect historical reality; and that contrary to most children's books, does not have a very happy ending.

***From North to South/Del Norte al Sur***

The 2010 bilingual award winning <sup>8</sup> book *From North to South/ Del Norte al Sur* tells the story of a young José and his family. Author Colato Laínez's story portrays the plight of many immigrant families who suffer because of their legal status in the United States. *From North to South* depicts the challenges of family separation while hopes and plans are abruptly stopped by the immigration and customs enforcement (ICE) agency. José is a young boy living in San Diego, California who loves gardening with his mother. One day he comes home to discover that his mother has been deported to Tijuana, Mexico during an ICE raid in the factory where she works. The story follows the weekend visit José and his father make to see his mother who is staying at a refuge home for deported women and children called Centro Madre Assunta. José and his mother spend some time with other women and children who are also waiting to reunite with their loved ones on the northern side of the border. They play games, plant seeds, exchange anecdotes, eat, and have a great time. When the day draws to a close José and his father (who is a legal permanent resident) must leave his mother behind because she cannot enter the United States until she "gets her papers" (Colato Laínez, 2010 p. 29). As if playing a game of tug-of-war with a giant mountain, "the north" drags José and his father back to San Diego while "the south" holds his mother static in Tijuana. The story concludes with José in the backseat of a car being told a nighttime story by his mother

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<sup>8</sup> Awards include: 2011 International Latino Book Award, Best Bilingual Children's Book, 2011 Americas Book Award Commended Title, 2011 California Book Award Finalist, 2011-2012 Tejas Star Book Award Finalist, 2011 Junior Library Guild Selection (<http://recolatolainez.com/>)

and dreaming that he is together with both his mother and father celebrating under fireworks.

Author and teacher, René Colato Laínez, along with illustrator, Joe Cepeda tackled a very sensitive and relevant subject that directly affects the Chicana/o community. Our society is in a constant debate over issues surrounding immigration, immigration policy, and the social movements addressing immigration, both pro and con. Immigration and an undocumented status is a reality that many Latina/os face daily. Colato Laínez, himself an immigrant from El Salvador, wrote this book knowing, seeing and living the consequences that deportation has on a family. In a personal conversation with the author I asked why he wrote this book, he replied “because it is true, this happened to one of my students” (personal communication June 2014). He went on to describe how while teaching, one of his students began to cry because her father had been deported to Tijuana. He realized that this was not an isolated incident and that there were many children born in the U.S. whose parents were undocumented. That is why he chose to write this story. Not just to portray the pain and trauma of being separated from a loved one, but also to create literature that could support children experiencing these situations.

### **Author**

Award winning author René Colato Laínez is first and foremost a teacher. In a personal conversation with me he described himself and his journey to authorship as a lifelong love of stories. Currently he is a bilingual teacher at Fernangeles Elementary school in Sun Valley, California. He is a graduate of the Vermont College MFA program in Writing for Children and Young Adults. Colato Laínez was born in El Salvador. This

is where his love of writing began. His uncle was the poet Jorge Buenaventura Laínez, and Colato Laínez credits him as his inspiration. As he grew older, El Salvador was involved in a civil war. He and his father had to leave the country to seek refuge in the United States. This was no easy feat, like many Central American refugees they encountered many obstacles on their almost three thousand mile journey. His father lost all his money and had to work to obtain more for their trip. This resulted in Colato Laínez being left alone in an old trailer that became their home. In that old trailer, he states that he wrote and wrote in notebooks about his dreams, desires, adventures, and anything else he could fathom. It was there, that he realized that he could be a writer.

Triumphing over all obstacles, Colato Laínez prevailed and went on to college and eventually became an elementary school teacher. It was here that his stories now had an audience. He was known as “the teacher full of stories” and later inquired about how to publish some of his tales. In 1996, he took the course “Writing for Children and Teenagers” with The Institute of Children’s Literature. But it was not until April 2001 that he really started to pursue his dream of publication. In the meantime, he took many creative writing classes and one in particular was with renowned bilingual children’s literature authors Alma Flor Ada and F. Isabel Campoy. This encounter and dedication eventually led to the publication of his first book, *Waiting for Papá / Esperando a Papá* in 2004. He currently has nine published children’s books and has deals to publish more in the future. His publications and passion for teaching have also earned him many accolades including a 2007 “Top Ten New Latino Authors to Watch (and Read)” by [latinostories.com](http://latinostories.com) and 2006 Special Recognition as Teacher and Author by Los Angeles Board of Education (<http://Renécolatolainez.com/>).

## **Immigration**

Latina/o immigration is not a new phenomenon to the United States. According to David G. Gutierrez (2013)

The history of Latino migration to the U.S. has complex origins rooted in the nation's territorial and economic expansion. Technically, the first significant influx of Latino immigrants to the U.S. occurred during the California Gold Rush, or just after most of the modern boundary between the U.S. and Mexico was established at the end of the U.S.-Mexican War (1846-48). Under the terms of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo (signed outside of Mexico City in February 1848), the Republic of Mexico ceded to the U.S. more than one-third of its former territory, including what are now the states of California, Nevada, Utah, Arizona, New Mexico, Colorado, Texas, and parts of several other states. In addition, the treaty also offered blanket naturalization to the estimated 75,000 to 100,000 former citizens of Mexico who chose to remain north of the new border at the end of the war.

(<http://www.nps.gov/latino/latinothemestudy/immigration.htm>)

However, the history of migration from Mexico and other Latin American countries also comes with a lengthy history of animosity. For as long as there has been immigration there has also been policy passed to make the United States inhospitable to newly arrived and/or longtime un/documented immigrants. Most recently the passage of California's Proposition 187 (denying basic healthcare and education rights to undocumented

immigrants), Proposition 227 (eliminating bilingual education), and Proposition 209 (an anti-affirmative action measure) are legal indicators that have encouraged both anti-immigrant and racist sentiments. Hostility against immigrants in California of the 1990s reached heights unseen since the 1920s. In Los Angeles County alone, a reported 23.5 percent increase in hate crimes occurred against Latinas and Latinos in 1994 (Pegler-Gordon, 2002). Years later, and under similar anti-immigrant conditions, Jennifer Stoeber-Ackerman makes a convincing argument in reference to Arizona's SB 1070. This law would broaden powers to local and state law enforcement to identify those reasonably suspected of not carrying or possessing immigration documents (2010). For English-speaking Arizonians, the sounds of Spanish as well as one's vocal "accent" can serve as evidence of one's legal status, tapping into already racialized perceptions of Latino immigrants and Spanish as "noise" (Archibold, 2010).

In an independent analysis of U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) data by the University of California Berkley and Davis Schools of Law it was estimated that:

More than 100,000 children have been affected by lawful permanent resident parental deportation between 1997 and 2007, and that at least 88,000 of impacted children were U.S. citizens. Moreover, our analysis estimates that approximately 44,000 children were under the age of 5 when their parent was deported. In addition to these children, this analysis estimates that more than 217,000 others experienced the deportation of an immediate family member who was a lawful permanent resident (Baum, Jones, & Barry, 2010).

While these numbers are disturbing, they do highlight the fact that there are over 200,000 children that have a story like José's. Colato Laínez discusses the deportation of José's mother in a very delicate yet straightforward manner. While he does not go into detail about the actual deportation, he states:

Two weeks ago, Mama didn't come home from work. That night, when she called us, we all cried together. She had been working at the factory when some men asked her for her immigration papers. But Mama was born in Mexico and didn't have those papers. The men put Mama and other workers in a van. In a few hours, Mama was in Tijuana, Mexico (2010 p.7).

The simplicity of the explanation is enough for a child to understand, yet it also provides an opportunity for questions and discussion from the reader. It can be argued that children's literature makes even latent social tensions transparent because books for the young are a means of socialization-a means for handling those stresses and uncertainties (MacCann, 1998 p.xiv)

Discussing the traumatic events in children's literature is not only essential but suitable for young minds. "Despite the difficulties of representing the Holocaust, or perhaps because of them, there seems to be consensus now that children's literature is the most rather than the least appropriate literary forum for trauma work. Subjects previously thought too upsetting for children are now deemed appropriate and even necessary" (Kidd, 2005 p. 120). Much like the Holocaust the act of deportation begins with the dehumanization of an individual. Seeing them as criminals and "illegal aliens" as

opposed to mothers, children and fathers allows for the deporter (ICE) to remove any sort of human qualities the person may have. What Colato Laínez has done is given the “illegal aliens” agency and voice. He humanizes the people who have and are suffering:

Inside there were many rooms and hallways. On the patio, children jumped rope and played marbles. One woman painted pottery and another weaved a poncho. “These are my friends Doña Maria and Joséfa,” Mama said. “They have been here almost a month. They make and sell beautiful crafts. Soon they will have enough money to continue their trip north.”

(Colato Laínez, 2010 p.12)

Colato Laínez, also provides children with the knowledge that there are people who help the deported family members. By discussing the “big house” (2010 p. 10) Centro Madre Assunta is also now recognized by the children as a safe place.

### **Centro Madre Assunta**

Centro Madre Assunta is a non-profit, donations based organization in Tijuana, Mexico that assists women and children who are awaiting re-entry to the United States. Led by the Missionaries of St. Charles Borromeo-Scalabrinianas since 1985, they provide apostolic services for migrants who come to the border, hoping to achieve their dreams and aspirations. They assist women and children who have been in the U.S., who have been deported and maybe at a disadvantage, possibly unprotected, at the mercy of robbers, smugglers, border patrol and also the indifference of society. One of the primary objectives of Centro Madre Assunta is to provide women and children migrants a place where they can feel the love of God, to encourage them to keep moving towards a goal of

economic, social and spiritual growth. The Center also provides three meals per day, clothes, shoes, legal assistance, psychological care, and medical assistance, as well as access to phones (<http://assunta-tj.wix.com/assunta#!about-us>).

Colato Laínez and Cepeda do a remarkable job in bringing to life Centro Madre Assunta. The bright colors used by Cepeda depict the positive energy that is emitted by the home and its humanitarian efforts. The bold use of green and orange while in Jose's mother's room as well as the yellows and blues utilized for the surrounding garden areas give life to the home. It would be easy for an illustrator to simply paint the home in neutral tones to allow focus on the story of Jose and his family. But with the cheerful use of color, Centro Madre Assunta communicates a supporting and optimistic tone for the story. The positive use of color is a theme that Cepeda continues throughout the story. This provides the story with a deeper dimension of hope and encouragement.

### **No Happy Ending**

Traditionally, stories for children may have two different ways of ending happily: one in which the special happiness peculiar to children is depicted, the other depicting the happiness they will experience when they are grown up (Pape, 1992). By the end of *From North to South* the text stays true to its realist momentum. Throughout the story there are optimistic encounters with José, his mother, and the children at Centro Madre Assunta. As the children all collect seeds to garden they play a game and dance. They prepare to paint their makeshift vases for their seeds to grow in, all the while discussing how far away they are from their parents. They plant the seeds to commemorate their parents and hope that when the flowers bloom from the seeds they will be with their parents once

again. Scott Beck states that “the best books on migrancy can breathe life into characters and personalize their experience so it is at once universally human, individually unique, socioeconomically accurate and aesthetically pleasing” (2009, p.103). *From North to South* accomplishes this task humanizing the plight of José and the other children at the shelter.

Although disheartening, the benefit of having an unhappy conclusion is that it is an authentic reality that some people face. When José states “I dreamt that Mama had the right papers and we crossed the border together. Above our house, the sky filled with fireworks and I knew that all the other children would see their parents soon, too” (Colato Laínez, p. 32) the author lets us know of the uncertainty of Mama’s and the other children’s future. The power of familial love and hope helps mitigate, although not relieve, their circumstances. Although one might expect to have a traditional happy reunion in a story about a child losing his mother, Colato Laínez did not comply with the expectation. Instead he chose to stay true to his own student’s experience (and experience of many other children) of not being reunited with a parent and facing that painful uncertainty.

At the time of writing this thesis (2014), the anti-immigrant sentiment is strong in Southern California. Much like the sentiment laid out in the 1917 with the Bisbee Deportations, the Mexican Repatriation in the 1920’s-1930’s, Operation Wetback in 1954, the 1997 Chandler Round Up and the various propositions already discussed, the state of California is faced with anti-immigrant actions disguised as patriotism once again. On July 2, 2014 protesters shouting anti-immigration slogans blocked the arrival of three buses carrying approximately 140 undocumented Central American families,

mostly consisting of children, to a U.S. Border Patrol station after they were flown to San Diego from Texas. The migrants were sent to California to be assigned case numbers and undergo processing. Most were likely to be released under limited supervision to await deportation proceedings. However, the city of Murrieta which houses the processing center wanted nothing to do with the migrants and proceeded to shout their anti-immigrant rhetoric towards the buses, eventually forcing the buses to turn away.

The actions of July 2, 2014 indicate that regardless of the progress made, as a nation, America is not welcoming of migrants. Juxtaposed alongside, migrants coming from Central America and/or Mexico would still rather take their chances at a life in the U.S. than their current situation. The children in the buses and their parents deserve to have their stories told. Children of the protestors need to know that there is another side to the story of immigration. “Immigrant stories are an important part of American history because the stories humanize the immigrant experience and provide a pivotal segue through which to delve into U.S. history” (Lamme, L. L., Fu, D., & Lowery, R. M. 2004). *From North to South* tells a genuine story that unfortunately will continue to be relatable to a child. However, Colato Laínez’s gentle approach to a delicate subject is one that can support children’s understanding and recognition of this type of social reality.

## Chapter Five: Discussion & Conclusion

### Discussion

“Concern for humanization leads at once to the recognition of dehumanization, not only as an ontological possibility but as an historical reality.”

-Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, 1970

Dolores Huerta, César Chávez and Emma Tenayuca all have one great thing in common; they are all Chicana/os. They are labeled as heroes, but they are also human beings. At which point do we acknowledge the imperfections of our said heroes? At what point do we humanize them? Humanization is a struggle to be recognized as human, and the educator or parent who reads the books about Chicana/o leaders would contribute to social justice by recognizing the subjects he/she is referring to as such. When we cast someone in the role of hero and provide them with a pedestal on which they are low enough to be touchable but unreachable, we run the risk of heroification. Meaning that we can see them, talk to them even share ideas with them, but yet see them so high above us we have a difficult time emulating their methods for our own cause. We see them as Kathy Escamilla stated, “super-human” and therefore, not human at all. Monica Brown, Carmen Tafolla and Sharyll Teneyuca wrote about Chicana/o leaders, but stripped them of imperfections, thereby distorting the reality of their subjects for their audience. By omitting Tenayuca’s ostracism, Huerta and Chavez anti-immigrant tactics the authors have “turned flesh-and-blood individuals into pious, perfect creatures without conflicts...” (Loewen 2008, p. 11) thus, undergoing the process of heroification and generalization. In addition, for example, by omitting the role of the *nueceros* in the

almond strike, children and other readers may assume that all that is needed is the “right leader” to lead them to victory. Similarly, for the UFW, more information needs to be provided about the role of the farmworkers themselves and the public that supported the successful grape boycotts and labor contracts.

Our society dehumanizes the poor to such an extent that these overrepresentations defame the entire ethnicity in the eyes of the majority population. To teach or write about migrancy without reinforcing a negative stereotype of all Mexican Americans as migrants is a challenge that requires the incorporation of diverse perspectives. For these reasons, it is important that teachers and librarians use complementary materials that show Mexican American diversity. (Beck 2009, p. 124).

Authentic Chicana/o children’s literature can effectively demonstrate Mexican-American diversity. Books such as *Friends from the Other Side / Amigos del otro lado* (1993) by Gloria Anzaldúa which focuses on bullying, *Separate is Never Equal: Sylvia Mendez and Her Family’s Fight for Desegregation* (2014) by Duncan Tonatiuh who simplifies the pivotal Mendez vs. Westminster case in California and Colato-Lainez’s *Playing Loteria* (2005) book highlights the family game of Loteria. These books are just an example of the various books that highlight more than just the stereotypical Chicana/o Latina/o experience.

The books selected *Side by Side/Lado a Lado: The Story of Dolores Huerta and César Chávez* (Brown, 2010), *From North to South/Del Norte al Sur* (Colato-Lainez, 2010) and *that’s Not Fair! No Es Justo! Emma Tenayuca’s Struggle for Justice* (Tafolla

& Teneyuca, 2008) are a few more examples of how Chicana/o children's literature can effectively demonstrate Mexican American diversity. However, one notable difference is that the book *From North to South* is different in the sense that it does not deal with a specific movement, per se. It is about the real lived experiences that Chicana/os may encounter with deportation. In the end, these books reflect Chicana/o Latina/o history and should be in every elementary classroom, regardless of whether there are Chicana/os enrolled at the school. Diversity education is about genuinely learning about the culture, history, and lived experiences of your own and others; children's books are an effective and classic way to teach this.

As adults we view children's literature as benign and a way to keep kids quiet, but it is far more than that. Much like psychologists Drs. Kenneth and Mamie Clark used dolls (a seemingly benign childhood toy) to study the psychological effects of segregation on African-American children; children's books also have profound consequences. The test utilized during the Brown vs. The Board of Education trial proved- that "to separate [African-American children] from others of similar age and qualifications solely because of their race generates a feeling of inferiority as to their status in the community that may affect their hearts and minds in a way unlikely ever to be undone" ([naacpldf.org/brown-at-60-the-doll-test](http://naacpldf.org/brown-at-60-the-doll-test)). Books that are filled with stereotypes and generalizations act in the same way as the dolls. Children can and will internalize the few words that are being reflected back to them. Culturally relevant material can have a great impact. As evidenced by the success in students enrolled in the Mexican American Studies program in Tucson, Arizona before its legislative dismantling. The culturally relevant program

was “virtually an anti-dropout program (more than a 90 percent graduation rate) and a college student factory (upwards of 70 percent go on to college)” (Rodriguez, 2010).

The absence of a particular ethnic, racial, or cultural group from the stories in print and digital media is problematic. When children never see their culture, racial, or ethnic group(s) represented during story-time, they receive a resounding message that the reader/educator does not think their culture has value or worth discussing. They feel if they do not see themselves, they must not matter. This invisibility can be harmful to a child’s self-image. Latina children’s book author and illustrator, Maya Christina Gonzalez, recalls that as a young child she felt lost in the library among the rows of books that reflected the lives of other children but not her Latina culture. As an illustrator she has “reconciled the effects” of not seeing herself in the “real world” she is “no longer regulated to scratching” herself “onto blank pages of someone else’s book” (p.321 2011). The problem of cultural invisibility or the lack of diversity in children’s materials is a long-standing one.

The importance of multi-cultural children’s literature is a plight that is being heard by many. Organizations such as *REFORMA* (The National Association to Promote Library and Information Services to Latinos and the Spanish-Speaking), *Read Conmigo*, *Latinas for Latino Literature* and *We Need More Diverse Books* whose mission statement reads:

We Need Diverse Books is a grassroots organization created to address the lack of diverse, non-majority narratives in children’s literature. We Need

Diverse Books is committed to the ideal that embracing diversity will lead to acceptance, empathy, and ultimately equality.

We recognize all diverse experiences, including (but not limited to) LGBTQIA, people of color, gender diversity, people with disabilities, and ethnic, cultural, and religious minorities. Our mission is to promote or amplify diversification efforts and increase visibility for diverse books and authors, with a goal of empowering a wide range of readers in the process. (<http://weneeddiversebooks.tumblr.com/>)

These collectives are all committed to the cause of bringing pertinent literature to the youth of today, so that they may grow to live in a more tolerant and empathetic country.

Teachers are one of the greatest foundations for child identity development. Therefore, it is crucial that they understand the task at hand. It is imperative that they ask questions of their students, the child's parent, and especially the literature they are going to be sharing. It is important the teachers inquire about authors, subjects and themes about subjects they wish to teach and share. However, the most vital is to engage their students in critical dialogue, engage in "not pseudo-participation, but committed involvement" (Freire, 1970 p. 67) and enforce critical literacy programs. Ira Shor states, "critical literacy is language use that questions the social construction of the self. When we are critically literate, we examine our ongoing development, to reveal the subjective positions from which we make sense of the world and act in it" (1999, p. 2). It is for this reason that teachers must not be intimidated by initiating what might seem to be a

“difficult” subject matter. Their students, as young as eight years old are far more knowledgeable than we given them credit for.

During my first year as graduate student I was fortunate enough to take a Chicano/Latina Children’s Literature in Communities course with Dr. Rosa RiVera-Furumoto. As part of this course we were required to complete fifteen hours of service learning during the semester at an elementary school parent center that assisted first grade Chicano/Latino children and their families. We were tasked with conducting critical literacy workshops and activities centered on a particular Chicano/Latino based book. My team chose to present and work with the book *From North to South*. It was at this time that I witnessed first-hand the depth of knowledge and critical thinking abilities an eight-year old can possess. After reading the book, some parents were brought to tears, while the students also realized the depth of the literature. I would encourage all teachers to read the story and to engage the children and their parents in a series of critical dialogue questions and follow with an activity that will allow them to get a deeper understanding and connection to the book. The items listed below can serve as a model for teachers who are seeking to engage their students in culturally relevant and education literature.

Following the various phases provided by Alma Flor Ada’s, *A Magical Encounter* (2003); the students are asked the following:

From the Descriptive Phase: Promotes understanding of the message of the book.

1. Where is José’s mother? Why is she living there?

The Personal Interpretive Phase: Encourages the expression of feelings and emotions and to relate the book's content to the reader's personal experiences.

1. Have you ever experienced a family member moving far away?
2. What is an activity that you do or share with your parents that makes you happy?

The Critical/Multicultural/Antibias Phase: Promotes higher thinking skills. To encourage reflection on the themes of equality, inclusion, respect, and justice leading to peace.

1. What are some of the things that can happen when families are separated from each other?

The Creative/Transformative Phase: Encourages creative, constructive action leading to greater understanding and respect for others; to encourage taking responsibility for bringing about positive change in our own reality.

1. What are some ways that we can help people like José's mom?

By engaging the students with these questions they are able to critically think about the story that was read to them.

The respective activity to this book would be a letter writing campaign. At the time of the activity the book was out of print, the students were made aware of what exactly that meant (the story cannot be shared with others), how it can affect a child that is in the same situation as José, and what they, as allies, can do to help. They wrote a letter to the publisher expressing their concerns and asked them to please re-publish this important book. Through this activity the students actively connected to

the book and its contents. In addition, it provided their first step to social activism and community action. Therefore, when teaching these materials, it is imperative that the reader engage the students in critical dialogue and ask analytical questions that go beyond the scope of what is presented by the book.

## **Conclusion**

When I reflect on the completion of this thesis project and its significance, I think about the importance of having culturally relevant literature. I also think about the beautiful journey this study has taken me on. In particular I am referring to the personal conversation and interview with author, René Colato Laínez. This was an eye and heart opening experience for myself. There in front of me was a man full of stories and passion for children's literature. I was made privy to his upcoming publications as well as those stories never told. One story in particular brought me close to tears. It was based on his own experience in El Salvador, it told the story about a boy who was very poor and buys his mother a soda and piece of sweet bread for her birthday. While there is more depth to the story, he confided in me that the publishers were wary about the premise because there are already too many books written on the subject, and that he is stereotyping. While the publishers are cautious and correct, I could not help but feel as though this man's lived experience was being negated. But I also began to think of the larger picture, while yes there have been plenty of books written about Latinos in poverty, the fact is that poverty is a lived experience. The goal should be to publish a variety of books reflecting the Chicana/o Latina/o experience. There should be a plethora of literature so rich that one book about poverty will not stand out because the subject matter is Latino poverty, but because it is a genuine human story.

Stuart Hall (1990) wrote:

Cultural identity, in this second sense, is a matter of 'becoming' as well as of 'being'. It belongs to the future as much as to the past. It is not something which already exists, transcending place, time, history and culture. Cultural identities come from somewhere, have histories. But, like everything which is historical, they undergo constant transformation (pg.222).

My optimism leads to me to believe that in the future a child will not have to learn about the word Chicana/o from a Saturday morning sitcom. They will see their cultural identity in their classroom and in their homes. This project gave my partner and me the motivation, the enthusiasm and the drive to produce our own book. A book that has been years in the making, in my own mind. A book that will clarify that Chicana/o is definitely not a type of chicken.

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## Appendix A

### Is Chicano a Type of Chicken Book Letters:

A- Aztlán

B- Brown Berets

C- Sal Castro

Ch- Chicana/o Studies

D- Dolores Huerta

E- Emma Tenayuca

F- Familia

G- Gloria Anzaldúa

H- Hijas de Cuatemoc

I- Immigration

J- Justice for Janitors

K- CorKy Gonzales

L- Las Hermanas

M- Movimiento

N- Nueceros

O- Our Lady of Guadalupe

P- Americo Paredes

Q- Quetzal

R- Rudy Acuña

S- Ruben Salazar

T- Teatro Campesino

U- UFW

V- Ritchie Valens

W- Walkouts

X- Xicana/o

Y- Youth conference/Yo soy Juquin

Z- Zoot Suit Riots