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Culture Wars: A Quest for Justice in Arizona

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LOYOLA UNIVERSITY CHICAGO

CULTURE WARS: A QUEST FOR JUSTICE IN ARIZONA

A THESIS SUBMITTED TO
THE FACULTY OF THE GRADUATE SCHOOL
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MASTER OF ARTS

PROGRAM IN CULTURAL AND EDUCATIONAL POLICY STUDIES

BY

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ABSTRACT

The Southwest United States is the location of an ongoing culture clash between proponents of a monolithic American culture and Mexican-American culture. The significance of the debate is not just about Mexican-American studies; it reflects a broader debate about individual and collective identity in the United States. The two cultures have historically had a contentious relationship that is further intensified by their geographical proximity to one another. Some of the tensions have culminated in a conflict within the Tucson Unified School District between supporters and opponents of Mexican-American studies. One side of the debate sees the program as a means to help students succeed by learning about events and people through a particular cultural lens. Individuals on the other side of the debate disagree with the program because they feel that it unjustly gives Mexican-American students particular privileges and encourages students to disassociate from a collective “American” identity. An analysis of what justice demands for teaching heterogeneous groups of students is necessary to determine what is just. Philosophers such as Iris Marion Young, Nancy Fraser, and Danielle Allen have developed particular frameworks to address what justice demands in a variety of situations.

CHAPTER ONE

WHO ARE WE?

The question of American identity is, put simply, quite complex. In spite of its complexity, there are citizens who treat American identity as a monolithic construction. We saw this with the Twitter outrage that occurred when America's first Indian-American Miss America was crowned or when a Mexican-American boy sang the Star-Spangled Banner in a mariachi outfit at a NBA playoff game. They were subjected to having their status as an American questioned because of markers of racial and cultural difference. They were subjected to being compared to a particular monolithic ideal of what it means to be American, something that has been perpetuated through institutions, actions, and discursive practices since the foundation of this country. The classification of identity has always been more than recognition of difference, classification as "the other" has often resulted in differing levels of citizenship that limited one's ability to make decisions and have access to opportunities. Attempts at creating a more equitable society, especially in terms of education, can be seen in various policies, such as in *Brown V. Board of Education*. What is difficult to address within these discussions is not really the question of whether all students deserve equitable access to resources (educational, jobs, etc.) to be able to lead a flourishing life; what is often more difficult within discussions of equity is the acceptance and inclusion of individuals and groups who seek equity without assimilation, who aspire to increase access to opportunities without fully embracing the traditional monolithic view of American identity.

The concept of the self and his/her relationship with others is often the center of many philosophical discussions. In addition to the self as an individual experience, it is also a reflection of one or many collective experiences. It can be used as a means to understand some of the most perplexing problems and contentions of society at any given point of time. In his book *The Conquest of America* French-Bulgarian historian and essayist Tzvetan Todorov reflects on the “discovery *self* makes of the *other*.”¹ For Todorov, questions about the self as brought up in history regarding the conquest of America ought to resonate with his own experience between cultures as a French-Bulgarian. The existence of the self and how it develops in the in the face of culturally dissimilar groups sharing the same space is not a quandary unique to the geographic region known quite often as America, it can be found all over the world, including in Todorov’s own Europe. More often than not, identities are constantly in question, and a sense of otherness develops to describe individuals or groups whose identity (or identities) differ from that of the group distinguished as the subject. However, individuals and group identities are often more complex than they appear; Todorov takes a position that looks at the self as heterogeneous as well as what that heterogeneity means for interactions between all “selves” and “others.”²

Complexities within identity such as these can also be found in the historical narrative of modern nations on the continent of North America. What is of special significance is how this history is interwoven with the identities of the individuals and

¹Todorov, T. *The Conquest of America*. New York: Harper and Row Inc. 1984. 3.

²Ibid., 4-5.

groups who inhabit the land. Migration to the Americas started with who would now be known as the indigenous people of the Americas, followed by various European empires looking to settle on land that, from their perspective, was uninhabited as well as influxes of immigrants from all over the world that continue to the present day. Nations such as Canada, the United States, and Mexico have distinct histories. At the heart of the foundation of these nations still exists an encounter between two worlds, a product of colonization: an encounter so crucial that it has a profound effect on the narrative of each country. Tzvetan Todorov posits that the “discovery of America, or of the Americans is certainly the most astonishing encounter of our history” and that such a discovery “heralds our present identity as citizens of the world and interpreters of culture.”³ Although he speaks predominantly about the clash of cultures as seen in Mesoamerica, parallels can be made between Mesoamerica and other parts of America because of shared connections that exist between them.⁴

Understanding the complex nature of individual, group, and national identity is crucial for addressing current debates relating to culture, race, and identity. This paper will look at culture, race, and identity in curriculum historically, as well as utilize philosophy to unpack justice issues that affect the debate currently. In the first chapter I will look at the history of racial and cultural identity in the United States and how debates about curriculum have often been tied to the question of race. In the second chapter I will

³Todorov, T. *The Conquest of America*. New York: Harper and Row Inc. 1984. 4-5.

⁴Ibid., 4-5.

look at questions of race, particularly in the Southwestern United States, because of its location on the frontier between nations and cultures. It is important to note that cultural and racial difference has historically affected the distribution of resources and thus can be considered a current justice issue that needs to be analyzed by means of a political philosophy in order to come to some semblance of a just solution. The third chapter will look at how several political philosophers have created intellectual frameworks to assess and address concerns of societal injustice. The fourth chapter, the conclusion, will offer suggestions about how we as citizens of this country can begin to consider alternatives and solutions to repair inconsistencies as demonstrated by educational policy decisions between the country's rhetorical vision of democracy and inequalities within its practice.

It is important to define the terms that I will be using to describe particular identities. However, it is important to note that as with any demographic term, it cannot encompass the whole of an individual's identity. Terms such as Mexican-American are often best used to describe large groups of people at once and to discuss systemic phenomena. Individual selves are often much more complex, even while in relationships with systemic structures and institutions. However, for the sake of clarity, I will use the term Mexican-American to describe individuals of Mexican origin who live in the United States with the understanding that it does not fully encompass the identity of individuals of indigenous/Spanish origin who have descended from the area that is/was the nation of Mexico. The term Mexican-American refers to more of a cultural identity as opposed to a racial identity because Mexican-Americans are often biologically multiracial. There are individuals who display more the physical qualities that resemble their Spanish ancestors,

while other individuals appear to have carried on the biological traits of their indigenous ancestors. Linguistically, Mexican-American individuals may be bilingual in English and Spanish, but they may also be monolingual in either English or Spanish.

Many researchers use the term Anglo-American to describe individuals that are racially white who currently reside in the United States but have ancestral origins in Europe. The incongruity with using this term is that it equates all white people with having Anglo, or English origins. The distinction between racially white individuals from different backgrounds has been blurred as the result of the rise of whiteness or the systemization of granting individuals/groups access to opportunities on the basis of skin color. However, to use the term Anglo to describe a person who does not have ancestral origins in England seems like uncertainty about how to describe this phenomenon. For example, how does a light-skinned Mexican-American or an individual with Northern African heritage fit into the construct? Are there distinctions between a first-generation Romanian immigrant and an individual whose ancestors migrated to the US from England in the eighteenth century? Perhaps using the term Anglo emphasizes the systemic nature of whiteness and reiterates that no matter a racially white individual's country of ancestral origin, he/she is granted the same privileges. Although this topic merits further study, I only bring it up to describe some of the complications using the term. I will use the term white even though it does not fully address the complexities of the individual. White is a racial and a cultural term because it often refers to skin color as well as specific linguistic and cultural practices associated with being white.

CHAPTER TWO

A MELTING POT? THE QUESTION OF RACE AND CULTURE IN US HISTORY

The US has long held the reputation of being a land of immigrants, although that does not necessarily imply that immigrants are encouraged to maintain cultural traditions from their home country. The American Melting Pot is a metaphor that historically and currently alludes to the nation's identity complex and the debate between assimilationists and pluralists about the implications of our particular demographic dynamic. In spite of some initiatives that promoted different forms of pluralism, generations of migrants coming to the US have consistently been met with the forces of assimilation and acculturation.¹

The discussion about identity in the United States has consistently had a racialized component. It is important to emphasize that race, as a concept, has had a multitude of meanings for different people in different time periods. The discussion about race is often contentious, and changes given the overall political and historical climate at any given time. Scholars, politicians, activists, community members, and citizens of all kinds often talk about race in a variety of ways and have often discussed the concept in the context of schooling. How each scholar defined race and went about creating anti-racist pedagogies varied and was often affected by their own ideology as well as the historical

¹ Tyack, D.B. (1974). *The one best system: A history of American urban education*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1974. 232.

context in which they lived. For example, race was viewed differently during different time periods; race during different time periods was seen as a reflection of nationality (1900-1938), skin color (1939-1945), and culture (1946-1954). The development of anti-racist pedagogy and curricula have also been affected by diverse perspectives in regards to how to address the concept of race in the classroom.²

Debate about the country's origins and identity are often brought to light by means of curricular issues because of the role that schools play in the socialization process. David Tyack presents his research regarding these socialization practices in the chapter "Americanization: Match and Mismatch" from the book *One Best System*. Schools were the principal institutions for the socialization of immigrants and Tyack describes the socialization process, particularly focusing on the 1920s.³ He quotes John Daniels to express the significance of the role of schools in this process when he says "if you ask ten immigrants who have been in America long enough to rear families what American institution is most effective in making the immigrant part and parcel of American life, nine will reply 'the public school.'" ⁴Curriculum designed with the immigrants in mind often sought to reconcile the "difference in upbringing" between the recent arrival and the native-born to supposedly address issues of social inequality.⁵ The

²Burkholder, Zoe. *Color in the Classroom: How American Schools Taught Race, 1900–1954*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2011. 1- 103

³Tyack, D.B. (1974). *The one best system: A history of American urban education*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1974. 212, 229-233.

⁴Ibid., 229-233.

⁵Ibid., 229-233.

curriculum was developed on the notion that the new immigrants, their culture and way of life were inferior to middle-class American culture and practices.

The influx of immigrants has often been met with the intention of socializing recent arrivals to adopt shared “American” practices and heritage. As Tyack cites, schools were used as a socialization process to Americanize immigrants by teaching them English as well as about American customs so that they can find work as contributing members of society. In addition, part of the process has also included losing their native culture. Having an ethnic name, speaking another language, or engaging in ethnic practices have been traditionally frowned upon and would not allow the immigrant to shed negative designation of being a “foreigner.” One way educators encouraged the socialization of immigrants was through textbooks. No matter how immigrants were socialized, there was a clear understanding that their native culture and language was less than and in order to achieve social mobility, immigrants would have to adapt to American ways.⁶

In addition to the linguistic and cultural components of Americanization programs, these programs also often took on a racialized component. Tyack describes how Italian, Portuguese, and Mexican immigrants were considered to be of inferior races and that schools were used to learn the language and culture of the United States so that they can increase social standing. It is important to note the complications that exist in looking at race considering that it is a very loaded word and has been applied to different people in distinct ways. The concept of race and how it impacts the socialization

⁶Ibid., 229-233.

practices within the schooling of European immigrants in the 1920s is not the same as how the construct affects the schooling of Mexican-Americans today, even though what is happening today is greatly affected by historical practices.⁷

During the early twentieth century, non-Anglo Saxon immigrants gradually became classified as white. At first, they were considered to be non-white and intellectually inferior. At this time European immigrants were expected to assimilate and acculturate by means of Americanization. However, there were times when they were encouraged to share their cultural gifts with mainstream society, as an initiative called Intercultural education began to develop in the 1930s. The goal of Intercultural Education was to promote interactions between people of different who are of different cultural and ethnic backgrounds. However, eliminating prejudice for individuals who were not of European decent was not considered for tolerance education at this time. It was during this time period that, for the first time, European immigrants began to be considered to be white.⁸

Scholars who promoted a more anthropological view of race expressed concerns with the cultural gifts model of intercultural education because it did not address the systemic nature of racism and ignored the correlation between race and economic inequalities. Anti-racist initiatives that addressed issues of inequalities began to be met with great resistance between the time period after WWII until the Cold War because of a

⁷Ibid., 212.

⁸Burkholder, Zoe. *Color in the Classroom: How American Schools Taught Race, 1900–1954*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2011. 1- 103.

political climate that emphasized fear of the spread of communism. “Instead of teaching about racial others they promoted a colorblind ideal based on the psychological argument that it was better to ignore race and practice racial integration than to dwell on racial inequalities or race relations in America.”⁹This view of race was very much inspired by the intercultural education model, and also assisted in the development of desegregation efforts seen in *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka*. Racism, in this view was an individual problem that needed to be looked psychologically, not as a systemic issue.¹⁰

Even though Multicultural Education programs are currently quite common, controversies such as these continue to present day. As a result of the construction of a monolithic view of American identity as perpetuated through schools, African Americans, Latinos, Asians, and Native Americans students historically have not always found a place in their school curricula. An example of this is the Texas textbook controversy of 2010 where African Americans, Latinos, Asians, and Native Americans unsuccessfully fought to keep certain civil rights leaders in textbooks that would reach students all over the country.¹¹This indicates that many schoolchildren in the US are exposed to a history that does not necessarily reflect the contributions of prominent African American, Latino, Asian, and Native American figures. Although students learn American history in school, these classes generally have a Eurocentric bias as well as view the white identity as normative. As a result, certain districts have created ethnic studies

⁹Ibid., 173.

¹⁰Ibid., 173.

¹¹McKinley, J. Texas Conservatives Win Curriculum Change. *New York Times*. 2010. 1.

programs that view history and language from other perspectives, a movement that has been met with much opposition from individuals who have a more assimilationist view of language and culture in the United States.¹²

¹²McIntosh, P. *White Privilege*. Wellesley, MA: *Wellesley College Center for Research on Women*, 1988. 2.

CHAPTER THREE

CULTURAL ENCOUNTERS IN THE SOUTHWEST

The Southwestern United States is an especially volatile area in terms of identity as a result of the conflicting worldviews that exist, fueled by a tumultuous historical narrative. Tucson, Arizona is the location of an ongoing culture clash between adherents of mainstream American culture and Mexican-American culture. The two cultures have had a contentious relationship since the Southwest territory shifted from being the possession of Mexico to the U.S. after the Mexican-American War of 1848 as well as the Gadsden Purchase in 1853.¹The two cultures have historically had a contentious relationship that is further intensified by their geographical proximity to one another. Although the area is legally under the jurisdiction of the United States, many people have maintained Mexican cultural traditions, which themselves are actually a mix, a *mestizaje* of indigenous and Spanish traditions.²

Late Chicana, Feminist, and Queer scholar Gloria Anzaldúa in her work *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza* writes about her experience growing up on the U.S.-Mexican border and how the effects of that experience have contributed to her own self-conception as a cultural hybrid. She states that “the U.S.-Mexican border *es una*

¹Gonzalez, Juan. *Harvest of Empire*. New York. Penguin Group, 2000. 44.

²Anzaldúa, Gloria. *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza*. San Francisco: Aunt Lute Book Company, 1987. 25.

herida abierta where the Third World grates against the first and bleeds. And before a scab forms it hemorrhages again, the lifeblood of two worlds merging to form a third country - a border culture."³ In addition to looking at the cultural implications of participating in different cultures, Anzaldúa also emphasizes the power dynamics that exist as a result of the economic differences between the two countries. Anzaldúa emphasizes the sense of marginalization that many Mexican-American individuals face as the result of Mexican-Americans being viewed as the other, as the cultural inferior to whites. She also discusses the concept of the border in a concrete and abstract sense; that a border can be a physical border such as a border between nations as well as the non-physical boundaries between persons that may inhibit them from getting to know each other. Anzaldúa describes the symbol of the border as having the ability to "define the places that are safe and unsafe, to distinguish *us* from *them*."⁴

In an article discussing the formation of Arizona and New Mexico, Linda C. Noel describes how Mexican-Americans in Arizona have often been looked at by whites as *them*. Noel asserts that Mexican-Americans have gone through periods of inclusion and exclusion in the historical narrative of the U.S. She states that the Southwest states had "two very different strategies for integrating people of Mexican descent: pluralism and marginalization."⁵ However, marginalization was the predominant strategy utilized in Arizona. Mexican-Americans in Arizona were marked as the *other* and given different

³Ibid., 27.

⁵Noel, Linda C. " 'I am an American': Anglos, Mexicans, *Nativos* , and the National Debate over Arizona and New Mexico Statehood. *Pacific Historical Review*, Vol. 80, No. 3 (August 2011), 431.

opportunities for development because of that supposed difference. It did not matter if the person is a US citizen born to a family who has lived here for several generations or migrated to the US, Mexican-Americans in Arizona were not given the same level of citizenship as whites. Working class Mexican-Americans in Arizona throughout the twentieth century were not given the status of a full citizen and were more often considered "marginal Americans", as described by Noel.⁶

In terms of the conditions of life as a "marginal American," Mexican –Americans in Arizona experienced segregated residences, schools, jobs and lives overall. "Phoenix was just like Mississippi. People were just as bigoted. They had segregation. They had signs in many places Mexicans and Negroes not welcome." ⁷ Although segregation was legally outlawed in the state of Arizona since 1951, there still were great inequalities in terms of the quality of education that different students received. In Arizona, racial and cultural differences affected not only quality of schooling, but also employment and overall quality of life. "Mexicans and Mexican Americans remained the main source of unskilled and semi-skilled labor. They predominated in mining, agriculture, railroads, construction, domestic service, light manufacturing, low-level clerical jobs, and the service sector."⁸ Mexican-Americans struggled, albeit in different ways than African

⁶Ibid., 430-467.

⁷Thomas E. Sheridan. "Arizona: A History." Arizona: The University of Arizona Press. 1995. 283

⁸Maritza De La Trinidad. "Collective Outrage: Mexican American Activism and the Quest for Educational Equality and Reform, 1950-1990". University of Arizona. 2008. 14-49.

Americans to achieve equal status and recognition and have access to more opportunities.

Mexican-Americans in the Southwest were often looked at as a problem, a deficit model was often used in framing discussions about education for students. In the face of population growth, many Mexican-American students were viewed as a complication that needed to be resolved. In Los Angeles, an assistant supervisor for the school system reflected on the influx of Mexican-American students in the public school system in California with even greater disdain.

The Mexican problem... is principally the product of poverty in the home, which, in turn, is largely the appendage of the influx of immigrants from the republic south of us... The infusions of Spanish blood into Aztec and Maya veins has Latinized later generations since the sixteenth century. The mixture of the two is fundamentally responsible for the carefree, in not indolent, characteristic of the race.⁹

In addition to not having the rights as full citizens in Arizona, Mexican-Americans have historically been perceived of as an inferior other. The discursive practices that perpetuated this understanding still have an effect on how individuals and groups are perceived.

Some academics specifically emphasize the role that white supremacy has played in creating an unequal school system. Martha Menchaca and Richard Valencia state that "the rationale used to support the superiority of Anglo-Saxons encouraged unequal practices against racial minorities and justified the passage of segregationist legislation"¹⁰

⁹ Gilbert G. Gonzalez. "Segregation and the Education of Mexican Children, 1900-1940". Harvard Educational Review. 1999. 53-73.

¹⁰ Menchaca, Martha. Valencia, Richard R. "Anglo-Saxon Ideologies in the 1920s-1930s: Their Impact on the Segregation of Mexican Students in California" pp. 222-249.

Referring to events in the late 1800's, cases such as *Plessy* were rooted in ideas of Anglo-Saxon superiority that had originally developed from the perspective of the biological paradigm established by natural scientist Charles Darwin. Menchaca and Valencia describe how Darwin's theories were used by Herbert Spencer and Sir Francis Galton, to develop "new racist theories and spear-headed the era of 'Social Darwinism'. The 'Eugenics Movement' was founded by Sir Francis Galton, and Herbert Spencer presented the theory of the 'survival of the fittest.'" Applying Darwinian theories such as "survival of the fittest" to issues of race make racial inequalities appear as if they are the result of the innate inferiority of certain groups as opposed to looking at the systemic issues that create the inequalities in the first place.¹¹

Mexican-American Studies and Equity?

Conflicts regarding equity in curriculum are currently being debated as a result of the Mexican American Studies ban in the Tucson Unified School District. In order to address a legacy of eurocentric bias and help Mexican-American students achieve academically, educators and community members created the MAS program in the Tucson Unified School District. From 1997 – 2011, the program saw almost fourteen years of success. The program was seen as a way to end de facto discrimination in Tucson. The goal when it was established in 1997 was “to appease families who had sued the district, alleging segregation and racial inequity across the school system.”¹²

¹¹Ibid., pp. 222-249.

¹²Gersema, Emily. “Arizona Ethnic Studies Ban Reignites Discrimination Battle”. *The Arizona Republic*. 2010. 1.

Emily Gersema of the *Arizona Republic* newspaper states that Tom Horne, Arizona's Superintendent of Public Instruction who pushed for the ban, did not know that the Mexican American Studies Program was a way for the district to settle discrimination cases from the late seventies. At that time several parties brought cases against the Tucson Unified School District because of "racial bias in the makeup of its schools, staff, student discipline rates, and student services." Roy and Jodie Fisher, with the help of the NAACP in 1974 as well as Maria Mendoza sued the district and as a result it created the Mexican American Studies Program as well as the African American Studies program. Both programs were created as a measure to help increase graduation rates, test scores, and college enrollment rates for minority students because they were achieving at lower academic rates than white students in the district.¹³

Politicians Respond to HB 2281

Politicians in Arizona such as Tom Horne and Jon Huppenthal have worked on a campaign to successfully end the Mexican American Studies program in the Tucson Unified School District by passing HB 2281. Tom Horne moved to eliminate the program on the grounds that the MAS program "1) Promotes the overthrow of the United States government. 2) Promotes resentment toward a race or class of people. 3) Are designed primarily for pupils of a particular ethnic group. 4) Advocates ethnic solidarity instead of the treatment of pupils as individuals."¹⁴ As a result, educators and students have risen in defense of the classes and have brought national attention to the issue thus causing the

¹³Ibid., 1.

¹⁴Horne, T. *An Open Letter to the Citizens of Tucson*. 2007.

country to question what it considers to be "American".

Considering that white individuals will make up a smaller segment of the population compared to other groups in the near future and that there are complexities within individuals themselves, the definition of what constitutes "American" as well as what perspectives should be taught in school is one of the most burning questions of the twenty-first century. The significance of the debate is not just about Mexican-American studies; in actuality the debate reflects a broader debate about individual and collective identity in the United States. Geographically, Arizona is located by the border where two worlds meet. This distinction is not limited to the physical sense but also has embedded itself in the identities of the people who live there. There is no doubt that politicians in Arizona as well as proponents of the Mexican-American studies program have different perspectives about what students should be taught. In order to democratically arrive at some sort of compromise, I will use the concept of justice to shed light on what justice demands for teaching groups of heterogeneous students.

CHAPTER FOUR

JUSTICE: A PHILOSOPHICAL APPROACH

Although, addressing issues of inequity affecting Mexican-American students is of historical concern, it is also a philosophical issue of justice because of how it continues to present day. Even though, discussions regarding justice could extend to ancient philosophers, the sources used to evaluate this issue are part of contemporary discourse about philosophy of justice. There are many different intellectual frameworks that further assess justice that are prevalent in philosophy today. Some of these include, but are not limited to communitarianism, politics of distribution, politics of recognition, capabilities approach etc., and rightfully so; each contributes to a deeper understanding of what would make up a just society. However, for the sake of this paper, I will focus on what Nancy Fraser refers to as a bivalent mode of collectivity that encompasses both the politics of redistribution (John Rawls), as well as the politics of recognition (philosophers such as Iris Marion Young) in order to evaluate the current debate in Arizona. I will spend some time unpacking both politics of redistribution and recognition as they have informed Fraser's work, but will emphasize how they interlock to affect justice (or the lack thereof) as it plays out in society today. I will also utilize the work of Danielle Allen in her book *Talking to Strangers: Anxieties of Citizenship Since Brown Vs. Board of Education* to address an additional complication that affects how policies are implemented and received - interracial distrust. Most of the discussion in the discipline of

political philosophy about justice begins with the politics of redistribution and John Rawls. Many philosophers have used his work as a starting point for their own, while at times finding his theories to be insufficient. Iris Marion Young begins her search for social justice by looking at the distributive paradigm. She states that "the distributive paradigm defines social justice as the morally proper distribution of social benefits and burdens among society's members." This paradigm focuses "on the allocation of material goods such as things, resources, income wealth, or on the distribution of social positions, especially jobs."¹ Although it is impossible to negate the significance of the effects that economic injustice has on society, Young and other philosophers that promote theories that address aspects of politics of recognition assert that politics of redistribution is insufficient in understanding the complexities of societal inequalities.

Young and Fraser both assert that looking at justice through a distributive lens views the individual as being detached from the group (or groups) with whom the individual identifies in a process that obscures unequal power distribution and thus perpetuates the false idea that the dominant perspective is universal. Young states that "social groups of this sort are not simply collections of people, for they are more fundamentally intertwined with the identities of the people described as belonging to them."² Young also discusses her concerns about the implications that denying the existence of groups has on perpetuating current power dynamics. "Oppression happens to

¹Young, I. *Justice and the Politics of Difference*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1990. 15-16.

²Ibid., 43.

social groups. But philosophy and social theory typically lack a viable concept of the social group...some philosophers and policymakers even refuse to acknowledge the reality of social groups, a denial that often reinforces group oppressions.”³ Nancy Fraser also expresses her concerns with misrecognition, she states that "a difference-blind politics of redistribution can reinforce injustice by falsely universalizing dominant group norms, requiring subordinate groups to assimilate to them, and misrecognizing the latter's distinctive – ness.”⁴ Both Young and Fraser assert that the denial of social groups positions the dominant experience as universal and thus perpetuates misrecognition and forced assimilation, forms of oppression. According to Young the process of dominating excluded groups occurs in this way: “given the normality of its own cultural expressions and identity, the dominant group constructs the differences which some groups’ exhibit as lack and negation. These groups become marked as Other.”⁵ Young asserts that the dominant perspective expresses itself as universal whereas anyone else is marked by stereotypes and invisibility. ⁶In the case of the Mexican-American Studies ban, from Young we see that a monolithic understanding of American cultural practices, identity, and history was promoted by politicians as universal and all other cultural practices,

³Ibid., 43.

⁴Fraser, Nancy. *Social Justice in the Age of Identity Politics: Redistribution, Recognition, and Participation*. The Tanner Lectures On Human Values, Stanford University, 1996. 10.

⁵Young, I. *Justice and the Politics of Difference*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1990. 9-10.

⁶Ibid., 9-10.

identities, and histories were condemned.

I argue that it is important to maintain awareness of the power dynamics between dominant and oppressed groups while looking issues of justice. For Young, there are inequalities deeply embedded in issues affecting decision making power and procedures, division of labor and culture that are left unaccounted for while using a purely distributive lens to assess inequalities. For instance, the concept of oppression is central to Young's theory of justice. In order to thoroughly assess group oppression she specifically outlines "five faces of oppression" that affect the inequalities currently seen in society today: exploitation, marginalization, powerlessness, cultural imperialism, and violence.⁷ The first four faces of oppression have had and continue to have an effect on issues of equity in Tucson today; these are the conditions that have developed because of a legacy of domination and oppression.

However, even within theories that address aspects of politics of recognition, there exists an array of ideologies that emphasize the significance of recognition for a variety of reasons. For instance, philosophers such as Charles Taylor and Axel Honneth promote recognition on the grounds that it is a universal need for all humans in modern society. However, they do not take in consideration the needs that subordinate groups have are different than the dominant group. Philosopher Nancy Fraser asserts that philosophers such as Taylor and Honneth are "erasing the question of power"⁸ when they

⁷Ibid., 39.

⁸Fraser, Nancy. *Social Justice in the Age of Identity Politics: Redistribution, Recognition, and Participation*. The Tanner Lectures On Human Values, Stanford University, 1996. 34.

view recognition as some sort of universal human need as opposed to looking at the inequalities that exist between the groups who receive recognition and groups who do not. Fraser maintains that issues regarding recognition are significant because of how they relate to societal inequalities and are very much a matter of justice. She states that "recognition should be considered a matter of justice, not self-realization."⁹ Young also confirms that distribution is an important aspect of assessing the fairness of a society, but also admits to several areas where the theory is lacking. Young posits that the structural issues of inequality are often ignored by merely looking at the distribution of resources. Systems of domination and oppression have existed for centuries and thus theories that ignore their presence can be criticized for being simplistic and not ignoring the root cause of the issue. Young emphasizes the need to look at the social structures and institutions that aid in perpetuating inequalities.¹⁰ I argue that we need to use this same lens to look at the context in Arizona. Schools in Tucson have aided in preparing Mexican-American students for a particular working-class lifestyle. Issues relating to recognition are very much a justice issues that have real implications on the quality of life that individuals have.

There are quite a few similarities between how Young and Fraser articulate the need for an expanded conception of justice that goes beyond redistribution and also encompasses issues of recognition. However, Fraser best articulates how redistribution and recognition are two connected components of the same construct by looking at a

⁹Young, I. *Justice and the Politics of Difference*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1990. 34-40.

¹⁰*Ibid.*, 34-40.

bivalent conception of justice. Fraser expresses how the two are not mutually exclusive and that the introduction of a bivalent conception “treats distribution and recognition as distinct perspectives on, and dimensions of, justice, while at the same time encompassing both of them within a broader, overarching framework.”¹¹ For Fraser, the key to understanding justice in this context is to look at the degree to which members of society have, what she refers to as parity of participation. Fraser states that “justice requires social arrangements that permit all (adult) members of society to interact with one another as peers” and determining to what extent all members of society have this opportunity is to determine the level of parity of participation that exists.¹²

The determining factor for what would place an obstacle in front of achieving parity of participation for all adult members relates to how individuals and groups are assessed and marked by societal institutions. Fraser states that “it is unjust that some individuals and groups are denied the status of full partners in social interaction simply as a consequence of institutionalized patterns of interpretation and evaluation in whose construction they have not equally participated and that disparage their distinctive characteristics or the distinctive characteristics assigned to them.”¹³ The greatest concern in this context is that individuals and groups who have not been granted parity of participation had not been given the opportunity in the first place to establish said

¹¹Fraser, Nancy. *Social Justice in the Age of Identity Politics: Redistribution, Recognition, and Participation*. The Tanner Lectures On Human Values, Stanford University, 1996. 30.

¹²*Ibid.*, 30.

¹³*Ibid.*, 24.

institutions, nor were they given a role in determining how they would even be evaluated. Fraser asserts that this is extremely problematic because of the limitations it places on all groups and individuals with characteristics that have been designated as “the other”. She states that “women and/or people of color and/or gays and lesbians face obstacles in the quest for esteem that are not encountered by others. And everyone, including straight white men, faces further obstacles when opting to pursue projects and cultivate traits that are culturally coded as feminine, homosexual, or “nonwhite”.¹⁴ What is of special significance is the coding that alters one’s perception of the subject and further perpetuates the concept of otherness by means of a false dichotomy. To a great extent, Fraser is looking to ensure equal participation in democracy by assuring that all adult members are able to achieve parity of participation. Fraser recognizes the need to address the multiple levels of citizenship that prohibit all individuals from having access to equitable resources.¹⁵

Philosopher Danielle Allen also emphasizes the need for members of society to participate as full citizens in a democracy and that a historical legacy of interracial distrust still to this day impedes democratic processes. She maintains that assuring participation for all members is a task that all citizens of the United States should undertake. However, what has gotten in the way of equal participation, she emphasizes, is that interracial relationships have been historically marked by feelings of distrust. Regardless of the systemic and institutional structures that perpetuate inequalities in the

¹⁴Ibid., 27.

¹⁵Ibid., 24-30.

forms of oppression and domination that Young and Fraser have outlined, Allen contends that the underlying feelings that individuals have as a result of facing systemic issues of racism and classism prohibit the democratic process. “When citizenly relations are shot through distrust, efforts to solve collective problems inevitable founder.”¹⁶ She asserts that the feelings of distrust prohibit any efforts to address problems. It is important to emphasize that she views issues of distrust as an issue for people of all racial and ethnic backgrounds without consideration of their status in the dominant/oppressed hierarchy. “‘White’ blames ‘black’ and ‘black’ blames ‘white’ and who knows what others blame one another and then slip into the black-white muck.”¹⁷ This is not to say that she denies the existence of the hierarchy, the opposite is actually true, but, she does acknowledge that all members of society need to reflect on how they interact with people of different racial backgrounds because of the affect that distrust has on the democratic process.

For Allen, the year 1957 was a political turning point because it pushed all members of the polity to develop a new understanding of citizenship; although, not everyone accepted this new understanding. She emphasizes the significance of a photo taken in Arkansas in 1957 when a group of black students were on their way to attempt to attend a segregated school for the first time. The photo captures Hazel Bryan cursing Elizabeth Eckford in front of Central High School. Allen asserts that the photo is a representation of a changing face of citizenship in a legal sense, all while the day to day

¹⁶Allen, Danielle. *Talking to Strangers: Anxieties of Citizenship Since Brown Vs. Board of Education*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004. XV.

¹⁷Allen, Danielle. *Talking to Strangers: Anxieties of Citizenship Since Brown Vs. Board of Education*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004. XIII.

interactions were still deeply rooted in a system of dominance and acquiescence. “The irony of the photo, what gives it its immediate aesthetic charge, is that the two etiquettes of citizenship—the one of dominance, the other of acquiescence— that were meant to police the boundaries of the public sphere as a “whites-only” space have instead become the highly scrutinized subject of the public sphere.”¹⁸ This shift is of special importance because, according to Allen, citizens have still not come to terms with what this historical time period has done to a changing face of what it means to be a citizen.

However, in spite of the federal laws that grant rights to all citizens, not all citizens are granted the same level of citizenship. The individuals who protested against the Little Rock Nine gaining access to the segregated school as well as the Arkansas governor Orval Faubus who utilized the Arkansas National Guard to prohibit the students from entering the school are examples of political actors who worked to maintain a system of inequality that perpetuates different faces of citizenship for different people. Allen states that “We see clearly in the photo that the democracy of the United States in 1957 was made up of not one but at least two, and maybe three, four, or more, peoples, all living in the same polity but under different laws, with differential rights and powers, and with different habitual practices of citizenship.”¹⁹ The concern however, is that practices such as these, as engaged in by civilians, government officials, entire political groups, etc. go in direct opposition to the rhetorical concept of “oneness” and “unity” that

¹⁸ Ibid., 5.

¹⁹ Allen, Danielle. *Talking to Strangers: Anxieties of Citizenship Since Brown Vs. Board of Education*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004. 15.

is often perpetuated to represent the democracy of the United States.

This is not to say that the idea of “oneness” adequately represents a democracy because of how it encourages homogeneity and assimilation, and thus Allen contends that democracies should look to promote “wholeness”. “Citizenship taught habits of domination and acquiescence that, in conjunction, produced invisibility and a seeming oneness.”²⁰ Allen asserts that Hazel Bryan cursing at Elizabeth Eckford was an attempt at maintaining oneness in the public sphere, a rejection of any individuals who will not or cannot fit into a particular ideal. Allen posits that a democracy should not promote “oneness” rather; it should be promoting “wholeness.” She states that “an effort to make the people ‘whole’ might cultivate an aspiration to the coherence and integrity of a consolidated but complex, intricate, and differentiated body.”²¹ The idea of wholeness takes into consideration how systems and institutions affect people differently as well as identity aspects differ between individuals. The incorporation of the polity on the grounds of wholeness legitimizes each person’s role as a citizen instead of perpetuating a system of exclusion on the grounds of maintaining “oneness”. The implementation of a democracy that has at its core the goal of promoting the recognition of wholeness and full participation of its citizenry, however, is greatly affected in a climate characterized by interracial distrust. It is in this context that Allen promotes the development of political friendship to diminish some of these feelings of interracial distrust.

Allen describes the implications and responsibilities of engaging in “friendship”

²⁰Ibid., 18.

²¹Allen, Danielle. *Talking to Strangers: Anxieties of Citizenship Since Brown Vs. Board of Education*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004. 17.

with fellow citizens even when they are “strangers” and how viewing political relationships in this way increases equity. She states that “equity entails, above all else and as in friendship, a habit of attention by which citizens are attuned to the balances and imbalances in what citizens are giving up for each other.”²² There is a certain amount of sacrifice and trust involved in engaging with others and it is not necessarily based on emotion, rather it is based on practice. She contends that to enter into a political friendship is for all citizens to have access to power sharing. Allen describes what this would look like by emphasizing that “what counts as power sharing will differ with context, but anyone who wishes to cultivate trust across boundaries of distrust must aspire to bring people on either side of the relevant boundary into shared decision making.”²³ Allen, like Young and Fraser, is interested in creating a political climate that views all citizens as peers who share decision-making power and status, regardless of aspects of their identity that have historically branded them as “the other” and incapable of sharing equitable rights and responsibilities as full citizens. I argue that Allen’s work helps resolve discrepancies in regards to the debate over the MAS program.

²²Ibid.

²³Allen, Danielle. *Talking to Strangers: Anxieties of Citizenship Since Brown Vs. Board of Education*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004.

CHAPTER FIVE

WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?

In the first chapter I looked at the history of racial and cultural identity in the United States and how debates about curriculum have often been tied to the question of race. In the second chapter I looked at questions of race, particularly in the Southwest, because of its location on the frontier between nations and cultures. In the third chapter I looked at how several political philosophers have created intellectual frameworks to assess and address concerns of societal injustice. This chapter, the conclusion, will offer suggestions about how we as citizens of this country can find solutions to repair inconsistencies between the country's rhetorical vision of democracy and inequalities within its practice.

I am arguing that the works of Young, Fraser, and Allen act as a foundation for beginning to understand the conflict around the Mexican-American Studies program ban. All of the philosophers have an understanding of the systemic nature of dominance and oppression at the base of their work. Looking at Young's work we can see the issues of oppression that affect the current context in Tucson. We can see that historical and current issues of exploitation, marginalization, powerlessness, cultural imperialism all function to complicate the dialogue about the MAS program. Fraser reminds us specifically how politics of redistribution and politics of recognition are inseparable components of justice and how using a bivalent mode of collectivity encompasses both

aspects. Allen goes beyond the understanding of relationships of dominance and acquiescence and encourages the development of political friendship and talking to strangers to help facilitate democratic processes. I believe that an understanding of historical contentions relating to teaching about race, culture, and identity as well as utilizing the work of Young, Fraser, and Allen will allow us to better understand the current debate regarding Mexican-American Studies in Tucson and thus help us develop just solutions.

The work of Danielle Allen has offered us some potential solutions for helping citizens resolve the debate about Mexican-American Studies in Tucson. First, she comes from a similar place as Young and Fraser in recognizing that there are varying levels of citizenship that exist as the result of a system of domination and oppression without necessarily using those specific terms. She emphasized that they are built on historic conceptions of who deserves which rights. In the case of Tucson, this is the history of the quality of education for Mexican-American students and seeing how current issues are built on the foundation of historical injustices. Second, she points out that interracial distrust based on historic circumstances can impede policy discussions. I argue that this is a huge concern in coming to a resolution in Tucson. Judging from the conditions under which Mexican-Americans in Tucson have lived it makes sense that some would not necessarily assume that politicians will keep the best interests of the Mexican-American community in mind. Third, she posits that developing political friendships and talking to strangers can help facilitate political processes. I argue that if both parties engaged in a political friendship in a way where they both considered each other's interests then they

could eventually come to agreement and the debate would not be as polarized.¹

Allen emphasizes that the task of repairing the system of domination and oppression in society and its institutions cannot be left solely in the hands of politicians and policymakers, all citizens need to participate in meaningful exchanges with both people who they know as well as strangers to reduce distrust. Allen declares that, "any interaction among strangers can generate trust that the polity needs in order to maintain its basic relationships."² It makes sense that individuals from different groups often do not know or trust each other; segregation and the perpetuation of labeling people from different groups as "the other" has made it so people of different groups do not really know about each other or care much for each other's interests. Allen affirms the power of ordinary citizens in bringing about a new paradigm in power dynamics, specifically dynamics involving race. How would this play out if it were to be implemented in Arizona to create a solution for the Mexican-American Studies debate? The politicians who implemented the ban in the first place as they function in a democracy only represent certain citizens within the polity and thus the decisions made do not reflect a consensus between citizens. If strangers within Tucson began to have more meaningful exchanges then this would allow for a greater understanding of each other's perspectives as well as an increased involvement in supporting each other through decision-making, even when one's own interests are at-stake or have nothing to do with a particular decision.

¹Allen, Danielle. *Talking to Strangers: Anxieties of Citizenship Since Brown Vs. Board of Education*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004.

²Ibid., 158.

Citizens ought to support each other through decision-making regardless of whether or not they have a vested interest in the issue, or if the issue goes against their own interests. As Allen states "to make consensus politics possible, democratic citizens need ways to consider those communal decisions that do not go in their favor as nonetheless decisions to which they consent". In the context of a friendship, there has to be sacrifice for the good of the other, political friendship requires the same commitment; anything less is operating purely out of self-interest. Allen describes the difference and promotes equitable self-interest by stating that "whereas rivalrous self-interest is a commitment to one's own interests without regard to how they affect others, equitable self-interest treats the good of others as part of one's own interests."³ If decision making is supposed to be done for the good of the polity then it is not done in the self-interest of a particular group.

What can possibly happen if the debate continues as it has and both sides of the debate do not act as political friends? As with many ethnic studies programs, the Mexican-American Studies program was created in direct response to centuries of curricula perpetuating a monolithic view of American identity as well as economic inequalities. In addition to distrust because of current disagreements, it is built on the foundation of distrust that has been perpetuated through the centuries. Had there been a communal decision-making process initially, the debate would have never been nearly as polarized. However, is important to keep in mind that the more egalitarian view of individuals and groups than can be seen today is a fairly new concept; especially in light

³Ibid., 130-160.

of legal segregation and other forms of inequality that have historically plagued this continent. There has been a continual struggle for oppressed groups (not racially white, non-male, poor, etc.) to have a voice and it will take time to achieve reciprocity.⁴

Iris Marion Young also emphasizes the role of stranger interaction and relationships as a way to strengthen democratic processes and promotes pluralism. Young uses the concept of a city as a metaphor for being able to live amongst heterogeneous strangers. She states that “an ideal of city life as a vision of social relations affirming group difference. As a normative ideal, city life instantiates social relations of difference without exclusion.”⁵ She uses the metaphor of the city because it exemplifies how living in the city requires that people of different groups interact with strangers in city spaces.⁶

This metaphor extends to city politics and as Young states “if city politics is to be democratic and not dominated by the point of view of one group, it must be a politics that takes account of and provides voice for the different groups.”⁷ The voices of different groups need to be given a legitimate space in the discussion about issues that affect citizens. If you are not given a voice in decision-making the decisions that affect your life will be made by someone else; you will not be an actor, you will not have agency, and you will be acted upon. “Privatized decision-making processes in cities and towns reproduce and exacerbate inequalities and oppressions. They also produce or reinforce

⁴Ibid., 157.

⁵Young, I. *Justice and the Politics of Difference*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1990. 227.

⁶Ibid., 227.

⁷Ibid., 227.

segregations and exclusions within cities and between cities and towns, which contribute to exploitation, marginalization, and cultural imperialism.”⁸ I argue that if we do not work towards creating more inclusive decision-making processes in Tucson, a legacy of exploitation, marginalization, and cultural imperialism will persist.

However, it is important to look at otherness as it can be perpetuated in other ways by an oppressed group. This dynamic, although not systemic in nature, can exclude group members based on certain characteristics. Young describes her concerns with this:

If in their zeal to affirm a positive meaning of group specificity people seek or try to enforce a strong sense of mutual identification, they are likely to reproduce exclusions similar to those they confront. Those affirming the specificity of a group affinity should at the same time recognize and affirm the group and individual differences within the group.⁹

Although confronting a legacy of cultural imperialism is of great significance, it is important to still consider the differences within groups as to not make individuals with multiple group identifications feel alienated. Young refers to the possibility of “openness to unassimilated otherness” to describe the result of changing our social dynamics to resemble those of city life. This is not to say that group identifications are not significant, however, all groups, especially those who are fighting for equity, should recognize individual difference as to not hypocritically deny recognition to particular members.¹⁰

⁸Ibid., 227.

⁹Young, I. *Justice and the Politics of Difference*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1990. 236.

¹⁰Ibid., 230-260.

Anzaldúa describes this rejection and her life being stuck in limbo between cultures and identities and often feeling rejected by more than just the dominant group.¹¹ This is not to say that the Mexican American Studies program encouraged some students to feel rejected but what is to say that they did not? From my experience as a bilingual and bicultural educator growing up and teaching in a city I have met countless individuals who felt othered by groups other than the dominant group. Individuals who had their “Mexicaness” questioned by their love of the English language, or even their fluency in Chinese; individuals who were rejected by their communities for their sexual orientation or religion, feeling left in a state of limbo, a sense of otherness. If we move to a model of city life, to a place where people are at least *open* to unassimilated otherness then and only then can we undoubtedly assure that all citizens have a voice.

The debate over Mexican–American Studies in Tucson, Arizona continues to this day, and some doubt whether a conclusion can ever be reached. The current solution has been to create a new department, the Mexican American Student Services Department. The department has shifted its focus from providing culturally-relevant curricula to providing services to Mexican American students “in the areas of achievement, discipline, special-education placement, grade retention and placement in special programs”.¹² However, student services are not enough, the ethnic studies programs in Arizona were developed as part of a federal mandate and thus there needs to be a

¹¹Anzaldúa, Gloria. *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza*. San Francisco: Aunt Lute Book Company, 1987.

¹²Huicochea, Alexis. “Mexican American program gets new leader, name, focus”. *Arizona Daily Star*. 2012.

curricular component that replaces the Mexican-American Studies program. There have been attempts to develop new culturally-relevant classes to fulfill the federal mandate, but, the curriculum has yet to be approved. Part of the reason as to why there has not been any progress in terms of developing a suitable relates to some of the communication issues that Danielle Allen discussed. An article by NPR discusses the current conflict and states:

It sometimes sounds as if state and local officials are talking past each other. Tucson needs to offer ethnic studies to satisfy a federal mandate, yet Arizona officials say the content is inappropriate. The issue could be resolved by negotiation, but it could just as easily end up in court — or in the streets, again.¹³

Talking past each other will not help resolve this conflict, negotiating with each other will.

Considering that identity is an integral component of the self, educators, parents, community members, and politicians need to be aware of how their actions affect youth development. At the end of the day, all parties need to remember that we are talking about students and really need to keep them at the focus of all discussions. However, these debates are often complicated, as I have demonstrated, especially when they involve topics such as race and culture. They are also complicated systemically by the intimate relationship that race/culture has with the stratification of the economic system in the United States. Being considered an “other” because of race, cultural practices, language, etc. has often meant that the individual was considered inferior and offered opportunities that lead to a lower quality of life. Assimilation was often used as a strategy

¹³Robbins, Ted. “Tucson Revives Mexican-American Studies Program.” *National Public Radio*. 2013.

in schools to transform student's identity to reflect a more monolithic ideal of American identity, especially in Arizona. Young, Fraser, and Allen all discuss how these are justice issues that continue to this day. The Mexican-American Studies program was designed as an attempt to improve historical and current conditions and increase the quality of life for students and their families and mitigate a strong legacy of cultural imperialism. Although the program helped increase graduation rates, test scores, and college entrance it was cancelled because politicians felt that the cultural perspectives that it promoted were inappropriate. There has been some resolution in terms of the creation of a new department that offers special services to Mexican-American students but there is still disagreement in terms of what to include in the culturally-relevant classes.

So, where can we go from here? Politicians in Arizona have already demonstrated that they are perpetuating a particularly narrow perspective of American identity and history, and as Allen emphasizes, change will only occur when all citizens participate and take responsibility for assuring that decision-making processes are just. The politicians are not acting in isolation; they are representative of groups of people who perpetuate a similar ideology. What could really happen if we began to talk to strangers? What could happen if our social relations resembled those of a city filled with heterogeneous strangers? How often do proponents and opponents of the Mexican-American Studies program really sit down and talk to each other as people? It is important to keep in mind that in interacting with people on an interpersonal level beyond a systemic level, we have to navigate between being aware of the systemic structure of these justice issues but at the same time recognize the unique experiences and worldview

of each individual. We are all a part of the categories that which we are assigned to on a systemic level in addition to those that we assign ourselves to, but we are still people who interact on an interpersonal level and we have to treat each other as thus. If we worked towards ending interracial distrust and really saw each other as equal citizens then we could exist in a political friendship and create just solutions for the problems that we face. Although, it is important to consider the systemic/ group nature of all social problems, we cannot limit our understanding of each other's identities to what we know about each other's "groups". Do friends of different racial groups see each other solely as Mexican-American? As white? As African American? Most likely not, they get to know about the complexities within each other that make them individuals and talk through disagreements when there are ideological differences. This is not to say that people should be "color-blind" and ignore differences of race/culture and the systemic patterns of inequality that have been structured around these differences. However, I argue that there is more to individuals than their demographic information, they are much more complex. Gloria Anzaldúa refers to the borderlands as the space where two cultures meet within one's identity. This could mean different cultures in the sense of ethnic/national/racial culture, class cultures, culture related to sexual orientation, or cultures related to particular shared life experiences. In an increasingly complicated society with problems to match we need to have productive and just discussions in order to generate solutions. We need to reevaluate how we view individual, group, and national identities.

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