

November 3, 2014

Houghton Mifflin Harcourt

To the editors of Houghton Mifflin's *Texas History*

Dear Sirs,

At the request of the Texas Freedom Network Education Fund, I reviewed the 7th grade Texas history textbook you are submitting for adoption in Texas this year. I evaluated the sections of your product that are pertinent to my field of expertise – 19th century American history and U.S./Mexican relations during the early National period (i.e. units 2-4). I also reviewed the sections related to Mexican-American history during the 20th century.

Enclosed with this letter is a detailed report of my observations, as well as suggested revisions to improve your materials.

Overall, I found coverage of these areas in your product to be largely acceptable, but there are some very important details that caused concern on my part. While my more detailed comments are included in the enclosed report, I wanted to call your attention particularly to the following issues:

- The Mexican Independence movement really needs to be addressed in greater depth, both in terms of its causes, the course of the war and the peculiar manner in which independence was achieved (see detailed report). The events around the war (and not just the ones that took place in Texas) are quite relevant for a thorough understanding of the formation of Mexico and Mexican Texas. Without an understanding of the problems and issues that arose out of the manner that this independence movement culminated, the behavior and actions of the Mexican government in their relations and policies toward Texas make little rational sense.
- There are notable historical errors in the section dealing with Mexican Texas. Some of these errors could be construed as bias and they are specifically addressed in the accompanying report.
- Important figures like Joel Roberts Poinsett and David G. Burnet are absent from the text and Lorenzo de Zavala merits more detailed explanation in terms of his political career and his ties to Texas, as he was not just an ordinary Mexican politician.
- The legal status of Anglos who entered Texas after passage of the Law of April 6, 1830, should be a point of discussion in the text.
- The treatment of Tejanos and other minorities (free Blacks, Cherokees) after the Texas Revolution merits greater discussion.
- Chapter 14-Section 2: Conflict with Mexico, in my opinion, is very well written. I would like to add that by and large the sections dealing with events after the Texas Revolution were complete except for two items: 1). The Treatment of Tejanos mentioned above; 2) Santa Anna's journey to meet with Andrew Jackson deserves more analysis.
- I found your treatment of the Mexican-American War to be accurate but scarce in detail. I am especially concerned that Philip Kearney's expedition to Mexico is missing and that there is little

discussion of the California expeditions. The text does not fully address the aggressive nature of American foreign policy towards Mexico in terms of Texas and other Mexican lands the United States coveted. As I have always told my students, history is the good, the bad and the ugly, and we do a disservice to future citizens when we do not address or examine the less laudable parts of our history.

- I was impressed with the work concerning the Chicano movement. Unfortunately, there was very little concerning Hispanic Civil Rights in the 20th century. A more detailed observation is contained in the attached report.

A word about my qualifications. I am currently an assistant professor of teacher education at the University of Texas at El Paso, specializing in social studies education. I previously taught the subject for eight years at Ball State University and the University of Houston-Downtown. I earned my PhD in history from Purdue University, specializing in early 19th century American history and am considered an expert on US/Mexican relations during Mexico's early National period (1821-1848). In addition I have ten years' experience as a Texas public school teacher, with nine of those years either teaching fourth or seventh grade (i.e. the two grades in which Texas History is taught).

The views expressed here and in the enclosed document are my own and reflect my own long experience conducting archival research in this period of history. I hope you find the observations valuable in your efforts to provide the best educational product for Texas school children.

Sincerely,

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Mexican Independence

The decision to not address the Mexican Independence movement in greater depth is a disservice to your product and the students you intend to serve. While certainly your main focus should be the events that are tied to Texas, a thorough understanding of the structure of pre Independence Mexican society, the role it played in the independence movement and the course of that independence movement are central themes in truly understanding the events and stressors that would influence the Mexican period in Texas and lead to the Texas Independence movement. For instance the socio-political movements responsible for initiating the independence movement were not the same ones that culminated and consolidated the separation from Spain 11 years later. In essence, the leading “revolutionary” figures who initiated the war (primarily Jose Maria Morelos who had a real plan for changing the nature of colonial Mexican society) were killed off halfway through the war, and their vision was left to lesser figures to carry forward. The person most responsible for the culmination of Independence, Augustin Iturbide, was in no way a revolutionary and in fact had fought against the original revolutionaries until 1821. In that year, liberal changes in the Spanish government, prompted conservative members of Mexican society to switch sides and favor independence. Thus the culmination of the Mexican Independence movement was a conservative reaction rather than a liberal revolution. It would be akin as if the Tories in the Thirteen Colonies suddenly switched sides and took over as the main intellectual force behind American independence. Thus, unlike in the United States where the result of the Revolution politically discredited the bulk of their colonial conservatives (Tories), post-Independence Mexico was left with its hard conservative faction intact (politically and socially speaking) creating an unbridgeable philosophical polarity with the liberal elements that initiated the movement in the first place. This created a climate where real, long lasting compromise was a near impossibility, rendering post- independence politics in Mexico highly unstable. Without a thorough examination of the Mexican Independence movement and its aftermath, students will develop an impression that the failure of unity and stability in Mexico had more to do with inherent faults in the character and intellectual ability of Mexicans than in the highly unfavorable circumstances under which post-independence leaders had to operate while creating a new nation. In addition, the war was many times more destructive in terms of property, population and to the social structure of Mexico, than the American Revolution was to the colonists.

I want to add, that on pg. 144 there is a historical error. Napoleon invaded Spain in 1808 and replaced its king with his brother Joseph. The presence of French troops before 1808 was under the permission of the Spanish government who were working with the French in their invasion of Portugal.

Mexican Era Texas

1. The Spanish used to bribe hostile tribes to keep them pacified. Once the war ended, these bribes stopped and thus Indian raids into Texas and other parts of northern Mexico intensified.
2. On page 157 I highlighted the following quote: “Relatively few people lived in the wide open plains” What does the author mean by this... Texas was populated by a decent number of Native American groups like Comanche, Apache, Cherokee etc. The Comanches alone, who dominated the Panhandle all the way south to the border of the Hill Country were estimated to number between 10-20,000 members in this era. The “empty” Texas myth should not be

advanced in this texts and should instead read more like “there were not a great number of permanent settlements in what is today Texas

3. Pg 160- Mistake in paragraph 2. You refer to Miguel Ramos Arizpe as Manuel Ramos Arizpe.

4. Pg 161- The Mexican Independence movement is never referred to as the Mexican Revolution. Beyond being a gross misnomer (its culmination was in fact a reactionary triumph rather than a revolution) the term Mexican Revolution is reserved for the war that took place between 1910-1921.

5. Note and recognize that a very large number of Anglo American settlers in Texas were illegal squatters. These populations tended to be a source of continual irritation for not only the Mexican government but also those empresarios who were trying to fill their legal contracts.

6. There are some important players that are not mentioned or give very scant treatment. Joel Roberts Poinsett and David G. Burnet are missing from the discussion. Poinsett, the American plenipotentiary in Mexico from 1825-1830 is an especially important figure. His instructions from the US government to obtain Texas, and his frequent interference on internal Mexican matters, including his central role in organizing one of the main political parties in Mexico played a leading role in the disorders that plagued the central government. It is Poinsett’s assertion in 1825 that Texas will fall in the hands of the United States eventually as a result of Anglo immigration that presaged President Andrew Jackson’s approach to obtaining Texas.

7. While your publication does address Anglo squatters, the text incorrectly assert that they were few in number. Even families that had come legally, in certain cases ignored the conditions of their agreement and squatted on lands not designated for Anglo settlement. Authors should also acknowledge that most Anglos settlers had a tendency to ignore Mexican laws.

8. Pg 185 you make the following assertion: in truth however most Texas Indians in this area accepted the newcomers.” I would love to see the citation for that assertion. Is the author indicating the Native Americans that lived in the areas that were East of the Guadalupe river and South of the San Antonio Road? I mean if the Indians who lived in Texas were fairly accommodating, why then would the Mexican government need Anglo settlers to secure its borders from Apache and Comanche attacks?

9. Pg 192- San Antonio was not the oldest settlement in Texas. That honor goes to Ysleta and Socorro which were established in the 1680’s (i.e. the El Paso area has the oldest continuously settled communities in Texas)

10. Pg 197- paragraph 2, the author, I believe, intended to say that Vicente Guerrero was of African descent. What was written is that he was of Mexican descent, which of course is an absurdly obvious observation

11. Pg 197- No slavery did not remain legal in Texas after the passage of the law, it was momentarily tolerated with a view toward gradually phasing it out of existence in Texas.

12. You should explore more of Zavala’s career before he came to Texas. He was not just any other Mexican politician, he was one of the prominent leaders of the Liberal faction and through the 1820’s a political force of considerable weight. His fortunes declined markedly after the coup against President Guerrero.

Texas Revolution

I'd like to say that the authors did a good job summarizing Urrea's portion of the campaign.

1. Pg 235- Travis did not have a legal right to settle in Texas. The excerpt in your text would suggest otherwise- From the Handbook of Texas published by the Texas State Historical Society: "Travis arrived in Texas early in 1831, after the Law of April 6, 1830, made his immigration illegal. He arrived at San Felipe de Austin, and on May 21 obtained land from Stephen F. Austin.

2. Pg 235- Map/ diagram of the Alamo on this page incorrectly display the disposition of Mexican troops during the attack and imply that the attack came in five different directions (there were four separate columns). The main body attacked the Northern wall (Duque's forces), another unit led by Cos attacked the Northwest corner, Romero's attacked the East/ Northeaster corner and only Morales small force attacked from the south.

3. Pg 238- I am amazed that Henry McArdle's Dawn at the Alamo is used. It is, a highly inaccurate rendering of the battle that does little to advance a student's understanding of the events that took place.

4. Pg 239- Exactly how were any Mexicans "captured" at the Battle of the Alamo?

5. Pg 239- Avoid the Line in the Sand myth. There is absolutely no evidence that this ever happened. Much mythology was created by later authors (I would never use the term historians for them) for "patriotic" reasons.

6. Pg 240- Mention that the vast majority of the delegates (52) had not arrived in Texas until after the passage of the Law of April 6, 1830 giving them no formal legal status in Texas.

7. Pg 250- Make it clear that Santa Anna only had less than 25% of the Mexican Army with him at San Jacinto. The map you use in 249 would indicate that the totality of the Mexican forces were present at San Jacinto.

8. Pg 250- You should explore the story of what happened to Santa Anna after San Jacinto. This is actually quite important since it is very relevant for helping explain the Mexican American War nine years later, and dispelling the myth that the United States government was not actively engaged in promoting the Texas Revolution.

9. There should be a more in depth exploration of how Tejano families were treated by Anglos after the Texas Revolution.

Mexican American War

I found this section fairly well done but there is something that really needs to be addressed.

I am concerned that no mention was made of the Phillip Kearney expedition (which included Alexander Doniphan's column that captured the El Paso area and marched on Chihuahua) and that little attention was given to the invasion expedition sent to California. No matter how you spin it, the US cannot avoid confronting the fact that they were the aggressor nation in this war and that the real objective, all along, had been to despoil Mexico of the territories it possessed due West of Texas, especially California. Attacking California and New Mexico served no military strategic reason unless the goal was to appropriate the region.

20th Century (specifically Tejano Civil Rights issues in the 20th century)

I would like to start by stating that you did a very good job with the Chicano Movement, especially with mentioning La Raza Unida Party and MAYO. I do believe, however, that the discussion of Mexican Americans from the 1920's through the 1950's is a bit thin.

1. Pg 539- You dedicate only one paragraph to deal with Mexican Americans and the discrimination they faced in Texas especially during the nativist virulence of the 1920's
2. The founding of LULAC really merited a much longer explanation that that offered..
3. Pg 545- The text appears to imply that no Mexican Americans were forcibly, and quite illegally, deported during the Great Depression. That is of course not true and considering even contemporary issues, the treatment of Mexican Americans during the Great Depression holds even greater resonance.
4. Pg 565- I really think that only one sentence acknowledging Mexican Americans participation in WWII is inadequate. As Ken Burns learned the hard way with his unpardonable oversight of Mexican American service in The War documentary, the Mexican American community does not take ignorance of their war service lightly. Mexican Americans with Texas ties contributed 7 of the 17 Hispanic Americans who received the Medal of Honor for service in WW2.
5. Chapter on Great Depression- Does not address that New Deal Programs were not always made available to minorities.
6. Pg 579- Where is a mention of Gus Garcia? He was the lead attorney in *Bastrop v. Delgado* and *Hernandez v. Texas* as well as the attorney that represented the family of Felix Longoria. In many ways Gus Garcia is to Mexican Americans what Thurgood Marshall was to African Americans. The most powerful legal voice in helping dismantle legalized discrimination.