

Eva Veselková

M.A. Dissertation Evaluation

2015

Title of Dissertation: *A History of Unequal Opportunity in the U.S. Segregation of Latino School Children*

Eva Veselková has opted to devote her M.A. dissertation to segregation of Latino schoolchildren in the United States. This injustice of the American education system is a mere example of segregation in the United States and deserves to be studied. The work is well referenced and a plethora of online and printed sources have been consulted. The dissertation contains an Introduction, three main chapters, and a Conclusion. Eva's written English is quite good, but there are a number of grammatical errors. In the paragraphs that follow, I will offer my comments on the individual sections of the treatise.

In the Introduction, Eva makes it abundantly clear that the so-called "American Dream" did not materialize for many immigrants. She emphasizes that the playing field in America has never been level and that discrimination has held many people back. This applies both to education and employment. Eva spells out the content of the rest of the dissertation and explains her methodology. In addition, the primary and secondary sources consulted are evaluated. The main aims of the dissertation are a) to prove that the history of the Latino educational experience in the United States is one of inequality because of school segregation; b) to prove that educational opportunities of Latino children are still restricted by educational segregation in the present day. The Introduction fulfills its aim, which is to inform the reader of the aims and content of the treatise.

Chapter 1 is historical in nature. The goal here is to provide an overview of educational segregation of Latinos in the American southwest. Eva tells the story of the argumentation used to justify segregation of Latinos. Not only racist arguments were used as was the case with the African Americans, but also cultural differences, language, I.Q., social class, or even lack of hygiene. The main issue, however, is that Latino segregation did not have a firm legal mandate as was the case with African-Americans who were held back by *Plessy vs. Ferguson* (Separate, but equal.) Pseudoscientific I.Q. tests produced results indicating that Latinos were not as intellectually capable as others. I believe that the overview presented is vital to the understanding of the motivations of segregationists.

In Chapter 2, Eva discusses the Latino legal struggle for equal opportunity in education on the basis of a number of court cases. The League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC) was founded in 1929 to support these higher aims of the Latino population. The first class action lawsuit was *Salvatierra v. Del Rio Independent School District*. On appeal, the judge allowed segregation for other than racial reasons, thereby delivering a victory to the school district. However, the next case, won by anti-segregationists, namely *Alvarez v. Lemon Grove School District*, forbade segregation in that school district. However, it was not far-reaching enough to have statewide impact. The case of *Mendez v. Westminster School District* resulted in the desegregation of American schools in the southwest (not only for Latinos) because it pointed out discriminatory practices sanctioned by the education laws in California. This federal ruling made it clear that there could be no legally-sanctioned segregation of Latinos in education. This chapter is well conceived and properly argued.

Chapter 3 discusses why there is still de facto segregation in American schools today. Eva mentions the gerrymandering of school districts, housing segregation (White Flight), and the fact that most desegregation plans adopted during and after the Civil rights era did not have Latinos in mind. Methods of funding education still result in largely poorer Latinos having worse schools. This chapter is informative and critical.

In the Conclusion, Eva recapitulates her main points and suggests that the key to achieving real desegregation is to change the way schools are funded so that all schools would be of equal quality. She concedes, however, that this is unlikely to happen in the current political climate.

I think that this is a fine disserttion. The requirements for an acceptable work are exceeded and I recommend a mark of **excellent** based on the oral defense.

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Doc. PhDr. Francis D. Raška, PhD.
Department of American Studies