

The Rising Voices of Latino Change Agents in Education is an anthology of riveting stories by Latino educators trained as school change agents in the 1970s. This book joins other recent Latino/Chicano literary contributions to social justice and education.

## **The Rising Voices of Latino Change Agents in Education**

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# The Rising Voices of Latino Change Agents IN EDUCATION



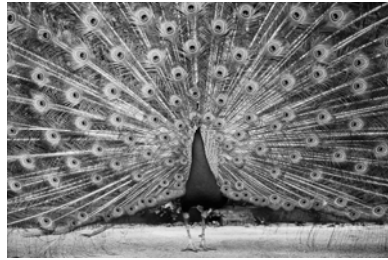
**Pauline Martinez-McBeth, M.Ed.**

ANTHOLOGY EDITOR

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*Somos Books Unlimited is an opportunity for ordinary people  
to document the legacy of their lives through the power of story  
while sharing their personal experiences and wisdom for future  
generations.*

**Pauline Martinez-McBeth, Anthology Editor**



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# **THE RISING VOICES OF LATINO CHANGE AGENTS IN EDUCATION**

**WRITTEN BY THE LATINO ELDERS**

**of**

**The Mexican American Counseling Program/Texas Tech  
University**

## **Introduction**

This anthology of stories (known as “*cuentos*” in the Latino oral tradition) is our way of passing wisdom from one generation to the next. This collection reflects the experiences, lessons learned, and wisdom gleaned by those immersed in a historic time: from segregation to integration, from college only for the elite...to the idea of higher education for all, from linguistically different as special education to linguistically different as bilingual education, from tracking to mainstreaming and the list goes on and on.

In many ways, this anthology represents a passing of the torch to a future generation of educators who wish to make significant changes in our school systems which are still in need of radical transformation in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. This body of work demonstrates what a small committed group of people can accomplish with the right training and strong conviction that “all children can learn.” We began the process, and now reach out to those younger to carry it forward.

How did we elders come to be? Long ago in 1970-1971, twenty young educators were selected from a five state area (Arizona, California, Colorado, New Mexico, and Texas,) to participate in a graduate program at Texas Tech University. The program (funded by the federal government under the Education Professional Development Act) resulted in a Master of Education degree in guidance and counseling that focused on “Counselor as Change Agent.”

This fellowship required all the young recipients to relocate to Lubbock, Texas for a period of one year. There we received specialized training that was both extraordinary and life changing for everyone involved.

As this group of “change agents” has grown into elder-hood it became important to record our lessons learned for a future generation of educators. Although much of the work was focused on Latino children who still lag dismally in graduation rates, along with other children from various economic, social and racial groups, it is our belief that *what* we learned is important for *all* children of this nation.

It is our hope that others, no matter who they are, no matter where they live, will take notice of the work done so far... and commit to training and nurturing a future group of educators in much the same way... to add to what has been built, for the sake of continuing not just the status quo... but to be real change agents too, all in service of additional and much needed educational change in our present time.

Being a change agent right now in education requires us to rethink the future differently than we ever have before, by asking questions like these: What are the needs of our nation as well as the world? What will the jobs of the future require? How can we create a resilient and sustainable future? Is there significant work to be done in

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the following areas: environmental protection, alternative sources of energy, health and science, technology, nutrition, healthy food and water sources? How will this impact our value systems and interpersonal relationships both locally and internationally?

We are now experiencing a dramatic shift of paradigms that was predicted many years ago by Dr. Jonas Salk, the discoverer of the polio vaccine. When he studied “closed systems” like the Earth, he concluded that the impact of overcrowding and overdevelopment in such a “closed system” will *force* us to dramatically shift in the way we think and relate to each other.

It is clearly the right time to examine how to teach now so that today’s children will live decently and flourish in the future. We believe this will be affected by those ‘change agents’ who bring new values and insight to the educational system, providing “transformative” experiences during this new millennium. Courage and insight are the keys to elevate future generations capable of transforming our society from a “*me*” generation to a “*we*” generation.

Perhaps we could start by studying the words of some of our most famous leaders: Mahatma Gandhi, Martin Luther King and César Chávez.

Mahatma Gandhi pointed the way:

“We must learn to live simply so others can simply live.”

“The Earth has enough for everyone’s needs but not everyone’s greed.”



Martin Luther King reminded us:

“A nation that continues year after year to spend more money on military defense than on programs of social uplift is approaching spiritual death.”

This type of change *which needs us*, needs our ideas and commitments to create an on-going transformation of awareness and a new set of values and attitudes that keeps up with the whirlwind changes in the world.

César Chávez observed that,

“Years of misguided teaching have resulted in the destruction of the best in our society, in our cultures and in the environment.”

And he also believed that:

“Students must have initiative; they should not be mere imitators. They must learn to think and act for themselves and be free... It is not enough to teach our young people to be successful...so they can realize their ambitions, so they can earn a good living, so they can accumulate the material things that this society bestows. Those are worthwhile goals. But it is not enough to progress as individuals while our friends and neighbors are left behind.”

So now we say to you...let us step boldly into the future for the sake of the next generations. Let us dream again and Dream Big! Let us

follow in the footsteps of our own indigenous heritages, for this concept of ‘acting for the future and not just for the present,’ belongs to all our ancestries. Long ago, important decisions were made, as the Native Americans still say today, ‘according to their effects on the seventh generation of the future.’ This is true wisdom!

Finally, if one might be tempted to despair over the work that remains to be done? Please take time to read **“Letter to a Young Activist during Troubled Times” (It is posted on several internet sites)** written by Jungian psychoanalyst and cantadora (keeper of the old stories), Dr. Clarissa Pinkola Estés. She reassures activists of every race, culture, and country that we must ***“not lose heart. We were made for these times!”***

Pauline Martinez-McBeth, M.Ed., Editor

**“Any small, calm thing that one soul can do to help another soul, to assist some portion of this poor suffering world, will help immensely. It is not given to us to know which acts or by whom, will cause the critical mass to tip toward an enduring good. What is needed for dramatic change is an accumulation of acts - adding, adding to, adding more, continuing. We know that it does not take “everyone on Earth” to bring justice and peace, but only a small, determined group who will not give up during the first, second, or hundredth gale.”**

***Clarissa Pinkola Estés, PhD***



**SAUL'S STORY**  
**A JOURNEY OF**  
**HOPE,**  
**CONVICTION, AND**  
**DETERMINATION**

**BY**  
**SAUL Q. SOLIS, M.ED.**



**(MESA, ARIZONA)**

**Saul Solis remembers his early schooling as one that began with excitement that soon became tainted with fear and confusion as he was subjected to ridicule and corporal punishment for speaking Spanish. He eventually became principal of his former elementary school. There he turned his suppressed anger into activism that eventually led to significant changes in curriculum as he embarked in developing a Bilingual Program at the school. Saul continues his fight for systemic change by working in a faith based community organization that empowers the poor to become personally and politically self sufficient. Saul Solis may be reached at [solsol@cox.net](mailto:solsol@cox.net).**

### **My Childhood**

It was a cloudy morning and excitement filled the air. My brother and sisters were playing hopscotch on the sidewalk laughing, chasing each other and running around waiting to get started off to school. My mother made sure we all dressed nicely with brand new clothes and shoes for the beginning of the new school year. As for me it was the first time ever to start school and the thrill of it filled the air with excitement and anticipation for me. However, in the back of my mind remained a piece of information that I had heard from my brother and sisters that they hoped I did not end up in the school's meanest teacher's class.

It didn't take very much time to realize that not only was she my first grade teacher but that the reputation of meanest teacher proved to be right. My excitement dissipated quickly but on top of it all I came to realize that not knowing English was detrimental to my well being at school.

My first three years of school were full of pain and fear. These emotions weren't about what students were going to do to me, but about the harm that teachers and the principal might inflict. Soon I learned not to speak in school, because if anyone spoke Spanish the principal paddled you. My first language was Spanish. In addition, harm came to you for not knowing English as I found out, by being ridiculed in front of the class or a slap on the face for not being able to explain something to the teacher. The teacher, who lifted me up from the ground by grabbing my hair and dropping me to the ground for not following directions, stripped me of my dignity for that day. For a long time, I had anger towards my first grade teacher and entertained the thought of someday when "I grew up, I would beat her up."

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I started school at age six in the 1A class. By the end of the year, I had advanced to grade 1B for the following year. Throughout my school years, I always wondered why I was a year older than most Anglo students. But being a Spanish speaker, I did first grade twice in order to learn English.

A professor once said that if you wanted to learn about a certain topic of interest write a research paper and the challenge to continue searching for answers is inevitable. “Don’t write one if you can’t deal with change” he said. Years later attending the University of Texas at El Paso, I wrote a research paper and it was the beginning of discovering myself, the Chicano movement, and educational inequalities. During this time, I also attended several lectures of a popular professor on campus. Dr. Sebastian’s lectures focused on the education of Mexican Americans, its inequalities and inadequacies. It was during this summer that I made my biggest discovery. I unmasked suppressed emotions and a new identity which unraveled many questions that inspired me to search for more answers.

I started looking back remembering my elementary years. In first grade every morning, I would cry a little when the teacher had us put our heads down. I missed the security of my mother and feared going to school. I recollected the two words written on my report card under teacher comments that read, “He is timid.” I didn’t know what it meant and lack of dictionaries at school or at home didn’t help. I still have my report cards and throughout the years, I look at them occasionally, so as not to forget.

As an adult, I looked at the report cards and then I felt tinges of anger run through my gut and a passion that filled my soul with fire that inspired me to prove everyone wrong “y Que si se puede!” Surprisingly, I discovered my strengths were in history and spelling.

I also like to write.

In spite of the fears and challenges, I received perfect attendance certificates three out of the four years at the school that I attended. I attended an elementary school whose student population was 100 % Hispanic, kindergarten through fourth grade. For grades fifth through sixth, I attended a different school where Hispanic and Anglo students attended together; I began noticing the inequalities and favoritism given to Anglo students. I always asked myself why Anglo students seemed better prepared to read and write. I didn't understand why we had a library at one school but not the other.

By the end of summer school at the university, I had come to the biggest realization that I wasn't the one to blame for the quality of education that I didn't receive. It was the school system that had shortchanged me educationally. I concluded that the school system had poorly prepared me, and those before and after me.

### **Teacher and Coach**

My first three years as a teacher were in a small rural farming town in Arizona. Lupe and I were newlyweds. We had our first baby and felt fortunate to get a job that was close to both our families. The principal who hired me was from my hometown and knew about me as an athlete. I had excelled in sports in high school and after graduation received offers to play football at several universities. This helped me "land" my first teaching and coaching job.

It didn't take long to become aware of the racial and bigoted attitudes. I saw the socio-economic differences between the two racial groups, leaving little doubt that we were the second class citizens in the school and treated as such. The community was no different. One day, I was walking down the street in front of a drugstore. As I passed this

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student's mother, she spat right in my pathway in front of me and kept on walking with no apologies given. A few more inches she would have hit my shoes.

In a party with coaches and spouses attending, I was introduced as "a good Mexican." My support for Latino students and parents was evident and I was looked at by the powers-to-be as a suspicious troublemaker. I attended community meetings with parents and became more vocal in the school by discussing the inequalities in teacher meetings with the principal and the superintendent individually. I had become a liability to the school district and I was asked to leave after three years.

During this time, Lupe and I had been enjoying our life together after being married for three years with our beautiful little baby, Laurita. I heard of the MACEP program at Texas Tech while attending summer school at the University of Arizona and applied. It was a nervous time for Lupe and me because we didn't have a job. I applied for the program and received a letter that I was going to be interviewed over the phone. Lupe and I were both nervous as we waited for the phone call. A Dr. George Smith interviewed me over the phone. This phone call opened doors for me and it gave my family hope.

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## **AMALIA'S STORY**

***“¿Y TU, QUE  
QUIERES?  
¿ENTONCES?” \****

**(\*AND YOU, WHAT  
DO YOU WANT?  
THEN DO IT!)**

**BY**

**AMALIA VILLEGAS,  
PH.D.**



**(TEMPE, ARIZONA)**

Amalia Villegas has been forever guided by her mother's "no excuses" mantra that encourages her to identify what she wants out of life and then just "do it." Amalia poignantly describes her personal transformation at the Texas Tech Program. Subsequently, she went on to get her PhD to eventually champion educational change in the Roosevelt School District and the town of Guadalupe through a Learning Center. She is now working at Phoenix College as a counselor and continues to advocate for disenfranchised youth.



It was mid-semester, spring of 1970, minutes before recess, when the Principal of Rose Linda Elementary School walked into my first grade classroom. As the last student walked out of the classroom, I approached the principal and the gentleman that was with him. I was introduced to Dr. George Smith who briefly stated that he was interested in having me apply to the Mexican American Counseling Program which was housed in Lubbock, Texas. My fear of leaving home immediately surfaced and straight away I told Dr. Smith that I was not interested. Fortunately, Dr. Smith was unrelenting and suggested: "Why don't you just fill out the application, turn it in, and then think about it. If you are still not interested, we'll set the application aside". So I did just as Dr. Smith asked me to do!

God is good and in May of 1970, my sixty-three year old mama and I drove eight hundred miles to Texas Tech in a 1967 Chevy Camaro, my first car. We arrived in Lubbock, in search of the Texas Tech campus, looking for barrack or building X76. I distinctly recall parking my Camaro and catching sight of an intense looking Mexican, an ominous and towering gentleman fingering, smoothing, and twisting a 'Zapata' mustache. Standing next to this giant of a man, was Mr. Stocky, a hefty, dark skinned Chicano with twinkling eyes and sculptured smile, seemed to be questioning our appearance. Yep! My mama and I were immediately embraced by Alejandro Pulido and Donato Ventura, welcoming us with the very memorable 'Chicano hand-shake'. Thus, began my 1970-1971 Journey, the year that definitely steered the rest of my life.

I arrived at Lubbock as a graduate of Arizona State University. Not long ago I stood in front of a roomful of six- and seven-year old, brown-eyed children. Twenty-five first grade students who teachers had failed to teach. These twenty-five children had flunked first grade! This was my introduction to teaching a class of high-spirited kids, smart kids

that the system had failed, children unsuccessfully taught and rejected by previous teachers, children that no one wanted to teach.

So who gets assigned to these kids? The recent graduate, the new teacher, Miss Villegas! Miss Villegas, with my “Si Se Puede” attitude and “All things are possible” spirit, fell in love with teaching and with these children who taught me about realizing dreams and living out my passion. I saw in each one of my kids, a representation of myself, my family, my friends, and my community.

These kids were my past and my present, without hesitation I introduced them to a future of hope, dreams, and possibilities. They awakened an unfathomable awareness of who I was and what I was capable of. They taught me about learning and I discovered how effortless it was to teach little ones. My mama’s mantra, “¿Y tu, que quieres?” “¿Entonces?”

1969, my first year of teaching, I integrated high-expectations, respect, love, and kindness into the life of twenty-five children who were guided by the yearning to learn, to be accepted, and to be understood.

On May of 1970, MACEP personnel George, Bob, Luis, and graduate students, Alejandro, Arnoldo, Arturo, Donato, Garro, Jesse, Mario, Martha, Pat, Pauline, Roberto, Ramon, Rosemarie, Sarah, Saul, Sylvia, Wally, Walter, and Virginia validated the importance of knowing who I was and generating change. The 1970-1971 was the year that I became one of twenty Chicanos that refined their skills and set in motion the lives of ‘change agents.’ In May of 1971, with a M.Ed., Amalia Valle Villegas was sent back home a changed woman!

The youngest daughter of eleven children, I grew up in the midst of a happy and united family along with poverty and the painful

effects of racism. And true to my upbringing, these injustices fueled my desire to transform the world into a world of peace, love, and harmony. For you see, I was also a product of the 60's, but more importantly, my parents, brothers, and sisters modeled the value of love, integrity, dignity, and pride.

Without realizing it, the Amalia who entered kindergarten, began a reverse transformation that day in 1964, the day my mother picked me up at Tempe Union High from a Girls Athletic Association event. Tears and anguish held inside until I was in my mother's presence.

Without hesitation, I conveyed to my mama that the high school counselor had presented me with a scholarship to Lamson's Business College. My mama knew her *mija's* dream. It was common knowledge among Mali's family and relatives that my career had been established since third grade. Mrs. Light, the third grade teacher had provided me with a sense of belonging and acceptance. Everyone in Mrs. Light's classroom became a believer in themselves during that third year of school.

So that late afternoon, as we drove home, my mama responded to my tears, "¿Y tu, que quieres?" "And you, what do you want?" "Quiero ser maestra", I responded." "I want to be a teacher". Then the definitive and unquestionable response came from my mama, "¿Entonces?" "Then do it?"

Challenges were not foreign to the Villegas family. The Villegas family had been raised in the midst of harsh conditions. Although it was common to hear others say, "It's the way of life for Mexicans." But, the Villegas were tenacious and skilled at rising beyond the harmful, destructive, and painful affects of discrimination.

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And that memorable day, my mama's "¿Entonces?" brought into focus past oppression, the impetus to make things happen and the strength to catapult Amalia into the future. "¿Entonces?" had always been my mama's way of saying, "Well! Just do it! For this too, we shall overcome!"

Amalia's existence, growing up as a Villegas had groomed me for the power that would gather in Lubbock, Texas, in one of the barracks numbered X76, in 1970-1971. This was the year for me to deal openly with my pain and suffering, the effect of racism especially in educational settings, years of being told that "I was less than..." The messages received at home, from my siblings, friends, family, and relatives and the contradictory messages unleashed at school began to be interpreted differently.

That day in May, Dr. George Smith, unbeknownst to him, presented me with a gift. George held the opportunity to peel away the many layers of protective covering, the armor that for so many years had sheltered me from pain.

Amalia, my birth name, became my family's affectionate nickname, Mali. Then my name was institutionalized as Molly. After accepting a year of discovering, emerging and becoming who I knew I was; I found that "I" had vanished throughout my educational years. Unsuspectingly, Amalia and Mali had disappeared. And by osmosis, in 1970-1971 I was revived and began to uncover my true self. 1970-1971 became the revolutionary year for Miss Villegas.

The Mexican American Counseling Education Program (MACEP) made it possible for me to retrieve myself, my family, my friends, my relatives, and my community. I began to travel the path of acceptance and MACEP unleashed my inner self where I caught

glimpses of the genuine me. My mama y papa, my brothers and sisters, my tíos and tías, and cousins, nephews and nieces also became okay after so many years of being taught that we were not. Most importantly, my family and I became visible once again. My soul was “unearthed”. I came out! I was awakened. I regained my voice, the communal voice that had been stripped away. And fearlessly, I confronted the most powerful belief, “Love yourself as I have loved you. Be who He created”.

In 1970, MACEP made it possible for me to retrieve myself, my family, friends, relatives, and community. Anew, I reclaimed my Mexican nobility along with discovering my Chicanisma. Beauty, intelligence, elegance, and grace were congruent with being Mexican-American. I was Mexican, Mexican-American, and a Chicana, a professional with an accent! I was also a Mexican with a communal voice. MACEP had revived me. In 1970-1971 I had the courage to make a promise to myself, “that on no account would I ever not believe in myself and my family. I would never ever abandon myself, my origin, and my roots.”

The first twenty years of my life, lost in the educational system, I had survived but I had paid an astronomical price. I had become an expert in reinventing and pretending to be what others saw and wanted me to be. MACEP exposed twenty years of rejecting who I was; twenty years of layers that included a pile of uncertainty, skepticism, mistrust, and doubt. Twenty years living amongst conflicting messages. Twenty years of suppressing who I was, an introvert, too isolated to confront the reality of living in a privileged white society, a social order governed by the color of a person’s skin. In 1970 I no longer discounted the truth.

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As seasoned members of MACEP battled and staged the culture wars that surrounded us and as they campaigned against the injustices taking place in Lubbock, I was immersed in my own private and personal crusade of becoming. As had occurred during my formative years, the natural traits of pride, worth, and dignity slowly edged their way back into my spirit. The ambiguous bind of being accepted and rejected at the same moment, time, space, and place became transparent in 1970-1971.

My fellow Chicanos helped me perceive society's spoken language of equality but with the actions of inequality. This immense power of virtual reality had disoriented me for too, too many years. I had been ensnared into accepting a virtual equality as truth, indisputable, sincere, and everlasting. Outside of my realm of reality, I began to understand that the appropriate and acceptable words spoken were but a compilation of behavior recognizable as treatment dispensed only to perceived second class individuals.

But this collection of evidence, a superficial reality witnessed and experienced, I shelved and labeled "I'm just not good enough". In Lubbock, Texas, in X76, the barrack that housed twenty Chicanos, valiant mentors and professors, I was bestowed a gift. I was given the courage to believe in myself and this energy was transformed to admit to the truth, that I lived in a world sustained by many and varied levels of racism.

In 1971, twenty Chicanos graduated with M Eds. I returned to Roosevelt School District as a counselor. Towards the end of the school term my relationship with the school ended in an EEOC grievance that I filed on behalf of students, parents, and community for discriminatory practices.

PAULINE MARTINEZ-MCBETH, M.ED., EDITOR

Among the negative criticisms listed by the administration was their dissatisfaction with a mural. An interactive mural that was planned, created, and illustrated by sixth, seventh, and eighth grade students. The mural was based on the book, *The Inner City Mother Goose*, written by Eve Merriam. How impactful was this experience that in 2009, I still remember the nursery rhymes that encouraged my students to disclose and share their short-lived years of pain and suffering because of racism and discrimination.

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**ALEJANDRO'S  
STORY**

**A QUEST FOR  
KNOWLEDGE:  
FROM  
CALIFORNIA  
TO TEXAS  
TECH AND  
BEYOND**

**BY**

**ALEJANDRO  
PULIDO, PH.D.**



**(CARPINTERIA, CALIFORNIA)**

Alejandro Pulido was born in a labor camp, and reared as a migrant. His first experience with the educational system was immersion into a classroom where he was the only Spanish speaking child. Alex's powerful story describes the rise through the ranks of education where he served as a teacher, counselor, principal, superintendent and finally after earning his doctorate, Dr. Pulido retired as a university professor. During his entire career he was motivated by the fact that systemic change only comes by gaining a position of power and working with *All Americans* including those who come from varied political and cultural affiliations. Alejandro continues his quest for equality as a member of the Carpinteria School Board of Education. (Dr. Alex Pulido can be reached at [dralex2@verizon.net](mailto:dralex2@verizon.net))



### **Part I: Prior to Texas Tech**

Alejandro was born to Miguel and Carmen Pulido in “El Campito,” a labor camp for farm workers, in Fillmore, California. In the early morning before the sun would rise, Miguel and Carmen would wake up and get prepared for the day in the fields. The smell of tortillas, being made by mama’s hands and eggs and frijoles sizzling in the *comal*, and the sound of music coming from the Mexican radio station, was Alejandro’s alarm clock. I lay in bed half awake, digesting the environment created by my parent’s daily ritual. This was the beginning of life for a young migrant worker. From a life of poverty, reared in the richness of the Mexican culture, is where lessons of life were learned.

At the approximate age of seven my parents moved in with Tio Pancho and Tia Soledad to Rancho Canada Larga located in the suburbs of Ventura, California. A few days later, Miguel and Carmen were offered full time positions and a permanent place to live. I was the oldest in the family but youngest of five cousins who helped to raise me and served as my mentors and protectors. As a youngster I would join my mother and father picking crops in the fields and when we worked I also played with my cousins. Life in the country was filled with the sweat of our labor and joy of friendships. I was a happy young man.

And then Alejandro started his academic life. Mill School was in his immediate future. Most memorable was my first day when my mother and cousins prepared me for my first adventure into academia. Unfortunately, the wonderful words spoken in their conversation and reality of my first experience did not jell.

The bus stop was close to a bean field on a country road and everyone waited until the bus came to a stop. “*Come in young man,*”

stated the bus driver. They were all “*gabachos*” speaking English and I thought they were staring and laughing at me. I panicked and ran from the bus into the bean fields. My mother chased Alejandro but failed to catch me. I would hide all day long until I saw the bus returning home in the afternoon.

This happened for three days until my father physically placed me in his car and took me to school. After being escorted into the classroom I was forced to attend or face my father’s punishment. My first two weeks were filled with more drama. I was the only Spanish speaking Mexican kid in the classroom and all the other kids spoke English. *Alejandro* became *Alex*.

The daily classroom activity was to give the flag salute and sing “God Bless America” in English. For a week I cried and wanted to leave the classroom and the teacher would bring my older cousin, from another classroom, to sit by my side and to take care of me until I became comfortable. It took me a couple of years to acclimate myself to the school environment where my cousins and I were the only Mexicans in attendance. The other kids were constantly poking fun at me and my cousins, because of our Mexican background, and provoking us into fights.

There was a teacher, Miss Parker, who took an interest in me and thought that I had great potential. Often she would drive out to the country and in her broken Spanish would converse with my mother. I remember that she would sit down at our table and eat tortillas and frijoles and tell my mother that I was a smart boy. My mother loved her. Miss Parker became our friend and supporter. This was my positive memory of Mill School.

My cousin, Frank, and I continued having problems with the other kids. When I was in the fifth grade, the principal called my mother and my aunt into her office and stated that if their sons didn't behave they would have to be placed on home study or be transferred to another school.

Our parents then heard about Sister Bernardis and Holy Cross School in Ventura about five miles from the ranch where we lived. Transportation was a problem for our parents but they felt it was worth the effort to get us there. So off to Holy Cross School and Sister Bernardis we went. Sister was great for Alex; she took me under her wing and assisted me in my journey into the future. She would always state, ***“Alex, you have a good mind and I am not going to let you waste it!”*** She kept me after school on several occasions helping me catch up with what I had previously missed. After three years, under her guidance, I was able to progress academically, especially in Math. Sister Bernardis was my guide and inspiration prior to being promoted to Ventura High School.

Ventura High School was another stereotypic adventure in Alejandro's academic life. I met with the high school counselor and she stated that since I grew up on a ranch and worked in the fields that I would know a lot about machines and technology. She declared that those who came from this type of background were pretty good with their hands. Throughout high school, I was programmed into technology programs including wood shop, metal shop, auto shop, and fortunately drafting and architecture. The only exception was my assignment to a college prep English class because of my previous high scores in English at Holy Cross School. I was very fortunate to have an understanding English teacher, her assistance and support helped me to excel. She was a tremendous asset for me.

The Rising Voices of Latino Change Agents in Education is an anthology of riveting stories by Latino educators trained as school change agents in the 1970s. This book joins other recent Latino/Chicano literary contributions to social justice and education.

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