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“Texas Rangers: The Good, The Bad, and The In-Between”

When I was in the seventh grade, my favorite subject was Texas History. Mr. Benton, my history teacher had a charismatic personality that captivated his young students. His larger than life narratives and “academy acclaimed” rhetoric increased my appetite for discovery. However, his grandiose presentation consisted of serious historical biases that I did not understand until I was in college. The most memorable recollection was his interpretation of the Texas Rangers and their involvement in the expansion of Texas. His stories usually involved the Texas Rangers fighting valiantly against savage depredating Indians. Their cause was always justifiable as they brought glory to the state of Texas. The mentality that Mr. Benton inhabited was clearly “traditional” in which he took a position that most adhered to his beliefs. Although I embraced his views of events as fact, I later learned that his lectures relied on personal opinion. The realization of his biased interpretation came to me as total shock and a complete loss of words as I read “Los Diablos Tejanos” by Stephen B. Oates in my college Texas History course. It sank to me that I was a victim of a distorted educational system that enforces certain codes and regulations into their history curriculum. The curriculum mandated by the Texas Department of Education needs to be revised and changed for the enhancement of education in retrospect to historical material being taught in public schools all across the

state. The textbooks provided by the Texas Department of Education are clearly of biased representation and information.

According to Steven Zemelman in his book titled *Best Practice: Today's Standards for Teaching & Learning in American Schools*, which is a book based on standards of education. The research includes its emphasis that "Students of social studies need regular opportunities to investigate topics in depth".¹ This is a critical concept that clearly involves the research of history. This would be the equivalent of assigning a research paper and allowing the student to discover new concepts and historical theories. Beyond the classical method of research for the sake of discovery, one could use a cause and effect teaching method in an in-class discussion that would eventually evolve into a debate of contested history. Let's take for example the situation with the Karankawas and the early settlers or the "Old 300". In a class room environment begin with the early history of Texas and talk about how the land originally belonged to the Karankawas and the European settlers invaded their lands. After a situation has been presented elaborate on important key points. For professors it should be important to provide a thorough explanation of historical events according to chronology. This method is recognized by the National Council for Social Studies (NCSS), which developed ten conceptual thematic strands of teaching high quality learning in social studies.¹ They recognized the importance of culture, time, continuity, change, people, places, environments, amongst others. It is clearly evident that the methods used by Mr. Benton fall short of these standards.

¹ Steven Zemelman, Harvey Daniels and Arthur Hyde, *Best Practice: Today's Standards for Teaching & Learning in Americas Schools*. (Portsmouth: Heinemann, 2005), 173.

There is also evidence that history is biased at an elementary level of education. I recall learning about the holocaust in elementary school and even attended a field trip that pertained to Nazi Germany and the extermination of six million Jews during WWII.² The graphic images of gas chambers were shocking. In Texas history the most similar experience of mass ethnic cleansing or genocide was apparent during the civilization and expansion of Texas. In “The Conquest of Texas”, Gary Clayton Anderson states, “Although the following statement may seem “presentistic” to some, in hindsight the conflict can be seen for what it was: an Anglo-Texas strategy and a policy (at a haphazard, debated, and even at times abandoned) that gradually led to the deliberate ethnic cleansing of a host of people, especially people of color.”³ It is evident that both situations are graphic and contain the same ethnic implications for oppressed ethnic groups. The reason for such great attention on the holocaust was due to many factors that affected the amplification of that particular historical event. Introduction of modern sources of media and the time span was shorter from modern time to the holocaust than to that of the bloody years of 1858-1859.⁴ In addition in reference to human psychology, it is generally easier to point out the mistakes of others as we ignore our own.

According to the Texas Education Agency (TEA) which issues the basic objectives to be covered in core courses in the form of Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills or (TEKS),⁵ there are regulations regarding what is to be taught in social studies classes. A very particular document that regulates history curriculum in the High Schools,

² Cathleen Cadigan, *Teaching About The Holocaust*, <http://teachingtheholocaust.org/>

³ Gary Clayton Anderson *The Conquest of Texas* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2005), 7.

⁴ Walter Prescott Webb *The Texas Rangers: A Century of Frontier Defense* (New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1935), 151.

⁵ Cathleen Cadigan, *Teaching About The Holocaust*, <http://teachingtheholocaust.org/>

is section 113.33.b no.4, it states as follows “The content, as appropriate for the grade level or course, enables students to understand the importance of patriotism, function in a free enterprise society, and appreciate the basic democratic values of our state and nations, as referenced in the Texas Education Code 28.002(h)”.⁶ The language in the text clearly gives evidence that there is a certain agenda that is to be taught which involves a sense of nationalistic pride and imperialistic attitude. The emphasis to discuss history which embodies patriotic sentiment is of priority in high school history discourse. The problem is that the Texas Education Code defines patriotism as adherence to a narrow view of history. It would be backward for students to learn and accept the fact that the Indians of Texas such as the Caddo, Comanche and Apaches were massacred and slaughtered at hands of the Texas Rangers and other governmental military entities such as the state militia.⁷ The code also promotes the education of free enterprise, which in the instance of land in Texas and the early empresario system was a prime example and representation of free enterprise. Taking land from Indians at no charge is as free, as free enterprise can become. The school system has the right idea to encourage students to have pride in their state and country, but they do this at the expense of people such as the Caddo and Wichita. Using the Rangers as an example, I want to investigate the ways that bias, patriotism, narrow curriculum and academic scholarship have created a simplistic view of history.

Although schools teach one perspective, the scholarship on the rangers is more diverse and complicated. It could be perceived that the Texas Rangers history is one that

⁶ Texas Education Agency State Regulation, *Chapter 113 Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills for Social Studies*, 1998 sec 113.33 b no.4 <http://www.tea.state.tx.us/rules/tac/chapter113/ch113c.html>

⁷ Texas Beyond History, *Twenty Years Without A Home, 1936- 1859*, <http://www.texasbeyondhistory.net/tejas/voices/without.html>

is contested by two different factions of scholars. The implications with the Texas Rangers and its disputed history range from clashing cultures and their role in the expansion and civilization of Texas, to their later duty of border protection and law enforcement. This evolving institution has experienced change and adaptation due to uncontrollable factors that derive from different socio-political issues in history.

Therefore the Texas Rangers history has been constantly under deep scrutiny by scholars of a minority ethnic class, for their malicious behavior against those races of color.

However, throughout time they have been far more revered than criticized, this is due to the vast amount of historians that choose to ignore the dark side of Texas Ranger history or simply view those atrocities as an act of necessity for state safe keeping. Clearly there is no evidence that suggests balance or an “in-between” in their historical context either they will be portrayed as heroic figures by some and lawless authoritarians by others. I feel that it is critical however to realize the importance of understanding the human condition amongst the distinct civilizations in Texas and their relationship since their introduction to one another. Research leads me to speculate that the division created by the two distinct groups of historians is due far in large by the misunderstanding and or failure to recognize the composition of the Texas Rangers.

The Texas Rangers like any other governmental institution is not short of its flaws. Since their involvement in the colonization of Texas or depredation of Indian land, depending on personal historical interpretation; they have been widely revered and detested for their actions. The Texas Rangers according to the statement by Gary Clayton Anderson “were compared to the situation of hired ethnic cleansing groups in Yugoslavia

in reference to the same characteristics of the Texas Rangers”.⁸ The Texas Rangers were infamous for their display of fearless bravado and expert shooting. Their courageous attitude derived from their own internal personal satisfaction and their precision, from the Texas Paterson Patent No. 5 Colt revolver.⁹ Robinson quotes in his book that J.W. Wilbarger wrote “With these improved fire arms in their hands, then unknown to the Indians and Mexicans...one ranger was a fair match for five or six Mexicans or Indians.”¹⁰ The Colt revolver was introduced in Texas in 1843 as proving grounds.¹¹ It was the superior fire power that outmatched Texas enemies the Mexican and the Indian.

The attitude of the Texas Rangers varied as well did their behavior according to historical evidence found in the immense sources of Ranger material. Three distinct groups of Rangers emerged from within their ranks. There was a categorization of them due to their actions this assumption is made with no proper psychological evaluation but based of historical interpretation. First, there were those Texas Rangers that were actually law abiding and had moral values. Second, there was a group that wore the star for status and symbolism but cared less about duty. Third, there were the despicable characters that joined to cloak their racial violence in the legitimacy of law. This sort of evaluation is made due to historical material based on their involvement in important historical events. It would be logical to think that the Texas Rangers were heroes and men of valor. Popular traditional narratives have inclined us to believe in their courageous personification. However, there are two contrasting historical interpretation of the Texas Rangers. As

⁸ Gary Clayton Anderson *The Conquest of Texas* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2005), 7.

⁹ Charles M. Robinson III *The Men Who Wear the Star: The Story Of The Texas Ranger* (New York: Random House,2000), 61.

¹⁰ Ibid, 62

¹¹ Richard C Rattenbury, *Colt Revolvers*, <http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/CC/Inc1.html>

John L. Davis puts it of early Ranger history “The Ranger was either the defender of these settlers or their hired gun, depending on which side one was on. To the Anglo settler and businessman, the Ranger stood for courage, peacekeeping, and frontier resourcefulness. To his opponents, he represented unhesitating violence, unrelenting pursuit and an unfair application of law”.¹²

Mexican-Americans and Native Americans viewed the Texas Rangers quite opposite than did the Anglo Texas community. Authors with the same mentality as Prescott Webb viewed the Rangers as cultural icons, while authors such as Julian Zamora view them as empowered lawless criminals. The clash of civilizations was large due in part to land. When these three distinct civilizations first encountered one another they saw each other as a threat of cultural stability. The Mexican American viewed the Texas Rangers specifically as terrible people. To have a better understanding of the situation it is valuable that we understand the historical and social implications that caused turmoil between the two distinct civilizations.

After the Rangers had success in displacing and eradicating the major threats by Indian tribes there was simultaneous threat to white expansion and control in south Texas.¹³ Mexicans during the 1840’s and 1850’s did not want to give up their land in south Texas and the Texas Rangers concentrated their efforts on that region on behalf of white settlers.¹⁴ The situation became drastic and the Texas Revolution and the Mexican American war gave them even more of a reason to conduct malicious acts against innocent Mexican-American civilians. In their span of existence of their first 150 years

¹² John L. Davis *The Texas Rangers: The First 150 Years* (San Antonio: The University of Texas at San Antonio, 2000), 3.

¹³ Julian Samora, Joe Bernal, and Albert Pena *Gunpowder Justice* (London: University of Notre Dame Press, 1979), 2.

¹⁴ *Ibid*, 2.

they spent 120 of those years harassing and willingly killing people in the valley of Texas and in particular people of Mexican heritage. The only wrong doing of the people from the valley of Texas was that they were “born Mexican”. The type of atrocities carried out by these Rangers could be said to clearly clarify their racist tendencies. It could be said the Texas Rangers remained unchallenged during the early years of Texas’s history due to their status, which now-a-days they would be considered “popular cultural iconic figures”. Julian Samora author of *Gunpowder Justice* put this situation into perspective “due to a great deal of scholarly work the Texas Ranger’s image has enjoyed the reputation of unchallenged fact”.¹⁵ The Texas Rangers were truly heroic figures in American history through Anglo literature and song they represented law in order in a savage world.

Documentation of the malicious behavior, however, was overshadowed by the glorification of the Texas Ranger in popular literature. During the Mexican-American war the Texas Rangers were perceived as men without moral judgment or values. In an article titled “Los Diablos Tejanos”, by Stephen B. Oates writes about the Texas Rangers and their involvement in the Mexican-American war of 1846-1847”.¹⁶ Stephen B. Oates illustrates the following in his article about the Texas Rangers and their role in the Mexican-American war. He quotes General Zachary Taylor as saying “But as soldiers who had to respect rank and order, these Rangers were beyond hope; they soon proved themselves so wild and tempestuous and utterly uncontrollable that even Taylor, as spirited and independent as any man, came to regard them as “barbarians, as licentious

¹⁵ Ibid, 2.

¹⁶ Jesus F. de la Teja, Paula Marks, and Ron Tyler *Texas: Crossroads of North America (USA: Houghton Mifflin, 2004)*, 243.

vandals.”¹⁷ It was during the Mexican-American war that the Texas Rangers immensely assisted in the conquering of the country of Mexico. General Taylor gives a gruesome account of the arrival of the Texas Rangers in Mexico; “For sooner they had arrived in Mexico than they began to commit shocking atrocities. They raided villages and pillaged farms; they shot or hanged unarmed Mexican civilians”.¹⁸ The harsh reality was that the Texas Rangers had an inherited hatred of Mexicans in general, regardless of the region which they inhabited.

Popular narratives of the Texas Rangers written under “traditional opinion” depict the Mexican American war differently. Prescott Webb, a professor at the University of Texas was a renowned expert also wrote countless number of books on the Texas Rangers as heroes. Webb’s *The Texas Rangers*, gives an enchanting version of their advancement into Monterrey, Mexico. “Like boys at play on the first frail ice with which winter has commenced to bridge their favorite stream, those fearless horsemen, in a spirit of boastful rivalry, vied with each other in approaching the very edge of danger. Riding singly and rapidly, they swept around the plain under the walls, each one in a wider and more perilous circle than his predecessor. While the marvelous ring performances of that interesting equestrian troupe was in progress, the artillerists of the citadel amused themselves by shooting at the spectators on the hills.”¹⁹ Boastful and graceful at his interpretations Prescott Webb’s colorful and intriguing narrative had the ability to intrigue his respectful audience. His larger than life and inspiring illustrations cemented

¹⁷ General Zachary Taylor to George T. Wood *Governors’ Letters 1846-60* (Archives, Texas State Library, Austin). July 7, 1846.

¹⁸ *Ibid.* July 7, 1846

¹⁹ Walter Prescott Webb *The Texas Rangers: A Century of Frontier Defense* (New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1935), 102.

this traditional depiction of the Texas Rangers as something Texas and America should look up to and praise.

Charm and glory are far from the perspective of Mexican's that experienced and lived through haunting tails of ("Los Rinches").²⁰ The Texas Rangers under General Taylor must have been the worst of the three groups. In a detailed account author Charles Harris recalls an incident that involved a drunken ranger in the town of San Francisco de los Patos in southern Coahuila.²¹ "After a bit too much to drink a ranger whose name remains unknown, dragged a wooden cross belonging to the holy church around the town plaza. The priest of the church tried to stop him but the ranger purposely ran the man over and subsequently killed him. The town enraged pulled him of his horse and burned him alive. His horse escaped and headed back to camp alone which hinted danger to the fellow rangers. The rangers headed into town and witnessed their comrades last moments as a group of Mexicans observed the fire. Then the rangers enraged started killing people at will. This incident however was kept secret to save embarrassment of the Army".²² These sort of morbid stories arise in constant accounts over the ranger's behavior during the Mexican American war.

The behavior of these Rangers was unwarranted and unappreciated by the locals of several towns in Mexico. Situations of Ranger ruthlessness was constantly occurring like at San Francisco de los Patos in Southern Coahuila. Many others accounts were

²⁰ Julian Samora, Joe Bernal, and Albert Pena *Gunpowder Justice* (London: University of Notre Dame Press, 1979), 4.

²¹ Charles Harris III *The Sanchez Navarros: A Socio economic Study of a Coahuilan Latifundio* (Chicago: Loyola University Press, 1964), 4-5.

²² Julian Samora, Joe Bernal, and Albert Pena *Gunpowder Justice* (London: University of Notre Dame Press, 1979), 27.

transpired through factual documentation and ironically not by the victims themselves but by the leader of the ranger regiment. Taking a further view into the letters of General Zachary Taylor nothing deserves more attention than his famous quote cited in almost every book pertaining to Texas Ranger History. He said “the mounted men from Texas have scarcely made one expedition without unwarrantably killing a Mexican....There is scarcely a form of crime that has not been reported to me as committed by them....”²³ This famous remark has become a cornerstone in the study of Texas Ranger history. This quote has turned up with challenge on both sides of the spectrum on its meaning and the true sentiments of General Zachary Taylor on the Texas Rangers. His infamous phrase has been perceived differently by historians that have studied the matter on the meaning of the phrase.

A challenge to Prescott Webb’s rendition of General Zachary is that of Julian Samora in his book *Gunpowder Justice*. Samora provides a provocative analysis on the Texas Rangers and their unlawful activity against Mexican-Americans in the valley of Texas, challenging Prescott Webb’s opinion that General Zachary Taylor praised the Rangers. Prescott Webb’s interpretation of General Zachary Taylor was that he appraised them by saying, “I fear they are a lawless set”.²⁴ Julian Samora uses the famous quote to challenge Prescotts Webb’s perspective of General Zachary Taylor on the Texas Rangers “the mounted men from Texas have scarcely made one expedition without unwarrantably killing a Mexican....There is scarcely a form of crime that has not been reported to me as

²³ John L. Davis *The Texas Rangers Images and Incidents* (San Antonio: The University of Texas at San Antonio, 1991), 31.

²⁴ Julian Samora, Joe Bernal, and Albert Pena *Gunpowder Justice* (London: University of Notre Dame Press, 1979), 28.

committed by them....”²⁵ It would be logical to view this statement as a sign of remorse and deep regret for the actions the Rangers committed by General Zachary Taylor. The Texas Rangers actions during the Mexican American War speak louder than words in this case people’s historical interpretation.

General Zachary Taylor did more than just pass judgment on the violence of the Texas Rangers: he had a deeper notion about why the rangers were so ruthless.²⁶ The acts committed by the Texas Rangers were symbolic of acts that derive from vindictive motifs. Oates’s explanation of the Texas Rangers and their reason for violence was due to their rugged upbringing in “Indian infested” Texas which at times would raid their small settlements. He goes on by saying “such isolated communities had only a trace of civil organization, almost no law, and overriding justice: revenge.”²⁷ Oates makes perfect sense on why some of those rangers we considered the “bad apples out of the batch” did what they did. The author’s justification for their vengeance was based on the vengeance over the horses stolen by renegade Indians and atrocities committed to them by both savage Indians and Mexicans. Oates eloquently justifies their actions by saying “Yes if Taylor was looking for an answer, this was it: this persisting compulsion to avenge atrocities themselves-to hang Mexican civilians, to gun down peon farmers in the moving sand south of the river, to fire over the heads of little brown boys running barefoot through the streets of Matamoros.”²⁸ The Texas Rangers wanted to avenge the death of their kin, from the Alamo, Goliad, Santa Fe and Mier expedition.²⁹ Could this clearly have been the

²⁵ Ibid, 28.

²⁶ Stephen B. Oates in *Visions of Glory: Los Diablos Tejanos* (No Publisher information) pg 27 from my *Texas History Handbook from The University of Texas at El Paso*.

²⁷ Ibid, 28.

²⁸ Ibid, 28.

²⁹ Ibid, 28.

motif for their atrocious behavior? Regardless if using vindictive behavior as justification for the death toll accumulated by their activity, it was still unlawful and inhumane. Their conduct should never have to be justified by any historian it would draw close parallels to defending a convicted murderer.

Stephen B. Oates and his assumptions were quite thoughtful but not as accurate as one would expect from a well constructed theory. What were the probabilities that most of the Texas Rangers serving in the Mexican-American war were relatives or close relatives of people killed in combat against the Mexican army? Another interesting aspect was that the most ruthless rangers were known to have been racist like Samuel Walker who had a reputation for hating Mexicans.³⁰ It was apparent that the clear condition was that if you were not Anglo especially in Mexico during the war you were susceptible to become a victim of murder in the first degree. Violence against innocent people should never be justified but should be considered as atrocities regardless of the circumstances. It was not until the change of time and more proper law practices that lawless rangers started being prosecuted for their violent actions.

General Zachary Taylor wrote about the ranger's valiant approach to the war with Mexico, but disliked their atrocious actions against innocent Mexican civilians. The cases of unlawfulness by the Texas Rangers during the Mexican-American war went without proper jurisdiction and trial. As time progressed and Texas now a state of the United States of America, the Texas Rangers in the next sixty years continued to protect the international border. With these new duties problems along the Mexican border continued to occur and in particular the lawless murders of Mexican immigrants and bandits. The

³⁰ Walter Prescott Webb *The Texas Rangers: A Century of Frontier Defense* (New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1935), 93.

Mexican Revolution however brings us to a deep and racial injustice on behalf of the men that wear the star. It was during this time that marks one of the worst episodes in ranger history.

During the Mexican Revolution the state of Texas had concern that the revolution would jump borders due to Pancho Villa and his raids in the lower Rio Grande valley in 1915.³¹ It was during this time that the focus of the rangers was the southern border of Texas.³² During this period not even Prescott Webb's passionate narratives could save the Texas Rangers from the unlawful acts of violence against Mexicans. Similar to the instances in the Mexican-American war this generation of ranger was of the same caliber. One incident involved an honest sheriff accompanied by four rangers to assist a train stick up in Brownsville. The law officials caught up to four individuals that fit the description of the assailants. Due to the prior failure in court proceedings involving Mexican bandit activity, the rangers decided to take matters into their own hands and shot the Mexican men behind the brush. They told him if you don't have the guts to do it, I will. The sheriff then gave his declaration in court involving prosecutor J.T. Canales.

This famous court case was actually constructed by J.T. Canales who was a Representative from the 77th District that decided to file charges against a group of rangers for abuse of their jurisdiction.³³ It was finally due to the diligent work of this prominent Hispanic man that the Texas Rangers legally met their match. In a series of charges brought against the Texas Rangers during the Mexican Revolution, J.T. Canales

³¹ Julian Samora, Joe Bernal, and Albert Pena *Gunpowder Justice* (London: University of Notre Dame Press, 1979), 64.

³² John Busby McClung *Texas Rangers Along The Rio Grande* (Ann Arbor: University Microfilms International, 1981) p 108.

³³ *Proceedings of the Joint Committee of the Senate and House in the Investigation of the Texas State Ranger Force*. (Austin: Texas State Archives, 1919).

sealed the fate of this once official law enforcement of Texas. It was during this process than one could realize that even men of color were perpetrators of lawless activity. The severity of the incident was not as graphic as killing someone, but it did involve carelessness. J.T. Canales accounts that “On November 16, 1918 Rangers George T. Hurst and Daniel Hinojosa, while in a state of intoxication discharged their pistols in the streets of San Diego, Duval County, Texas, and intimidated the citizens. They later resisted arrest and threatened the Constable with his life if he filed warrants.³⁴ Incidents of this caliber were actually the norm amongst ranger society and evidence proves that they neglected to consider public intoxication a crime if committed by them. This document killed two birds with one stone. First it prosecuted and presented graphic evidence of Texas Ranger lawlessness . Secondly, it reduced the force and role of the Texas Rangers.

These atrocities committed against innocent Mexican-American civilians along the border of Texas were finally receiving justice in this long legislative hearing. In one of his charges J.T. Canales speaks about a degenerate sergeant named J.J. Edds. He accounts how J.J. Edds killed a man by the named Lizando Munoz.³⁵ The occurrences after were a bit strange as the documentation of the investigation of the homicide was not turned in by the Adjutant General to the house which had been delayed for sometime and in turn allowed J.J. Edds to continue his service as a ranger.³⁶ The most awkward incident involving sergeant J.J. Edds was his involvement in conspiracy to murder. In J.T. Canales third charge against the ranger sergeant was that he had hired two Mexicans to kill a man

³⁴ Ibid, TSA 1919.

³⁵ Ibid, TSA 1919.

³⁶ Ibid, TSA 1919.

by the name of Jose Maria Gomes Salinas.³⁷ All the charges brought upon Sergeant J.J. Edds are quite contrasting from the traditional personification of the glorious Texas Rangers.

The Texas Rangers doomed themselves as an institution that spearheaded Texas law enforcement. Along with the diligent case preparation by J.T. Canales it staked the final dagger into their prominent history as the law enforcers of Texas. In his document to legislature his main intention was to decrease the size of the force. Prescott Webb gives his commentary on the situation “The ultimate result of the investigation was the law of March 31, 1919, which reduced the Ranger force to four regular companies not exceeding fifteen privates, a sergeant, and a captain”.³⁸ The reduction of the Texas force was surely a detrimental blow to the iconic figures portrayed by Prescott Webb’s narratives. The document presented by J.T Canales to the legislature was widely debated but the atrocities committed by the Texas Rangers superseded their nostalgic history they had embodied for a century and a half.

Prescott Webb’s interpretation in his book titled of the *Mexican Revolution* and *The Texas Rangers* was obscure. He’s statements towards a suspected murder map that would keep a toll of Mexicans by Anglo Texans as follows: “The murder map presents with fair accuracy the loss or the death of hundreds of Mexicans, many of them innocent, at the hands of the local posses, peace officers, and Texas Rangers”. In his description of the rangers during the Mexican Revolution he skims any actual activity that needed or was aided by Texas Rangers. He could have possibly known the real facts of their lawless activity and tried to hide them to preserve the heroic image of his beloved institution. He

³⁷ Ibid, TSA 1919.

³⁸ Julian Samora, Joe Bernal, and Albert Pena *Gunpowder Justice* (London: University of Notre Dame Press, 1979), 67.

claims that the rangers generally arrived at the scene of the crime too late. Unlike the other authors, Mr. Webb's interpretation falls short of the other author's interpretation of mistreatment of Mexicans. Prescott Webb usually depicted the Mexican Revolution as fighting with lawless bandits and Pancho Villa.³⁹ Judging according to evidence provided by Webb he spoke and strongly implicated Mexicans as the guilty villains along the border. He accounts for a Murder map of Mexico which gave statistics of murdered Anglos along the border. "This map called the Murder Map of Mexico, showed figures that shows 550 Americans."⁴⁰

This testifies that Mr. Webb tries to justify that the rangers weren't even as half as bad as the Mexicans. Mr. Prescott Webb however is not alone among authors on the virtuosity and glorification of the Texas Rangers. Co-authors Harris and Sadler of the book titled *The Texas Rangers* and *The Mexican Revolution*. The authors claim that the testimony given by Santavo Tijerino during the court hearings involving the persecution of rangers on behalf of J.T. Canales was completely biased they stated that his information was false.⁴¹ The authors however themselves give a hint of being biased on information that incriminates the rangers publicly. "Something a Ranger did do, however, was to threaten J.T. Canales. Frank Hamer warned Canales that he was "going to get hurt" if he continued criticizing the Rangers over the Tijerina matter. Being a lawyer, Canales wanted Hamer to admit making that threat in front of a witness. Hamer, who wasn't the sharpest tool in the shed, obligingly did so".⁴² Does this mean that those Texas

³⁹ Walter Prescott Webb *The Texas Rangers: A Century of Frontier Defense* (New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1935)

⁴⁰ *Ibid*, 477.

⁴¹ Charles H. Harris III and Louis R. Sadler *The Texas Rangers and The Mexican Revolution* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press 1983) 429.

⁴² *Ibid*, 429.

Rangers that are a bit smarter are lying about things said? Despite the fact the authors remain biased on both sides of the spectrum some pro Texas Rangers and the others anti Texas Rangers; it seems to me that the Texas Rangers history in the Mexican Revolution has transformed into a matter of contested history.

Describing the situation during the Mexican Revolution and the Texas Rangers is that it is a matter that is disputed widely amongst people who have deep emotional relationships with either the Texas Ranger or Mexicans. Historians are going to contest it according to their which side they take or hold an interest to. The real reason this history should be discussed is to understand the tensions between three distinct civilizations that clashed since their introduction and reached escalated levels of violence. The fact is that blood was shed from innocent people on both sides of the border by the same breed of inhumane people from both sides of the border as well. The contested history between traditionalist historians like Prescott Webb and challenging historians like Julian Samora should be looked as a complexity of human emotion and belief.

The lawless ruthlessness of the Texas Ranger was first apparent against their first mortal enemy before the “bandido” the Indian. Since Texas early beginnings Indians had been a nuisance to Anglo settlement and expansion. At first however, one author explains that relationships between them were at peaceful terms, “when the white settlers of Texas, composing Austin’s and De Witt’s colonies, first began to erect their cabin in this wild and beautiful country, all the Indian tribes were friendly”.⁴³ The relationship between both cultures was friendly at first but strained circumstances evolved their relationship into one of land wars. Indians were not going to as easily give up their land to Anglo settlers. In *The Conquest of Texas*, author Gary Clayton Anderson states

⁴³ A.J. Sowell *Rangers and Pioneers of Texas* (Austin: State House Press, 1991), 5.

“American Indians never relinquished their claim to Texas or the Great Plains. They fought the newcomers’ advance into central and West Texas almost from the beginning of Anglo settlement.”⁴⁴ Indian tribes were not just going to let people overstep and infringe on their culture. The Indians tribes had been living there for thousands of years.

The Anglo settlers of course needed someone to protect them from that raiding Indians during their convoys. However, we have to understand that the new settlers were actually the ones impeding on the Indians land. Stephen F. Austin was the first to contract men of ranging skills to help protect their settlers from any attacks. “Stephen F. Austin wanted to increase the protection given by Mexican government troops against the Indians, Austin said he would “employ ten men in addition to those employed by the government to act as rangers for the common defense.”⁴⁵ It was necessary to help protect lives of settlers during raids on convoys on behalf of Indians, however the Indians had every right to protect their lands. As Anglo settlers started expanding their frontiers they ran into more and more confrontations with a variety of Indian tribes the further they moved westward. “As Texans moved up the Brazos River and southward from the Red River, however, they soon clashed with settled farmer Indians, such as the Wichitas and the Caddos.”⁴⁶ It was evident that regardless of how far north Anglos advanced and expanded their settlements they would always run into problems and combat with Indian tribes of Texas.

The men who did the fighting against the Indians were the Texas Rangers. The Texas Rangers were infamous for their violent character by Indians tribes. According to

⁴⁴ Gary Clayton Anderson *The Conquest of Texas* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2005), 6.

⁴⁵ John L. Davis *The Texas Rangers: The First 150 Years* (San Antonio: The University of Texas at San Antonio, 2000), 6.

⁴⁶ Gary Clayton Anderson *The Conquest of Texas* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2005), 6.

Gary Clayton Anderson “the ethnic conflict continued in Texas because the Anglos wanted it to; ethnic cleansing, not genocide, became state policy.”⁴⁷ This author puts himself in a predicament by deliberately stating that implemented plan by the government to systematically remove Native Americans was not genocide due to the fact that “Texas endorsed a policy of ethnic cleansing”.⁴⁸ Disturbingly his comment does not make sense and the situation that Texas was in “endorsing ethnic cleansing” is even more to an extent horrific since there was policy on “deliberately committing genocide”. At least in Rwanda the Hutu did not sit down and devise a plan of action on the Tootsie’s. Mass extermination of people regardless of the initial intentions of an entity to just displace people using death as a means to accomplish that goal, it is still genocide. Those people at the fore front as Indian exterminators were those men Prescott Webb defined as the “men of valor” the Texas Rangers.

Native Tribes such as the Comanche, Apache and Caddo amongst others were victims of displacement by the government of the United States. After nearly forty years of constant conflict with Indians, either due to territory or constant depredations on white settlers caused the government to construct reservations for Indians of Texas. In 1856 the reservations were mostly perceived as concentration camps. Texas Rangers had implemented tactics that were as savage as those used by “depredating Indians”. “While officers such as Lee and Johnston Generals avoided using such words as “extermination” in their correspondence, they quickly saw the advantages of the tactics used by the Texas Rangers- they would attack Indians in their villages and force Indian men to stand and

⁴⁷ Ibid, 7.

⁴⁸ Ibid, 7.

defend their families.”⁴⁹ The type of behavior displayed by the Texas Rangers was unconventional and seemed adopted from natives Indians themselves which Anglo-settlers considered savage. Their strategy was absolutely inhumane and it seemed that the rangers adopted a strategy that was extreme and mimicked that of Indians to raid on their settlements. Morbid stories of drowning babies, killing and raping Indian women were some of the countless acts enacted by the Texas Rangers.

The Texas Rangers who were the prototype solution of fearless Indians helped the government in devising a plan to counter the Indians. In June of 1856 the government implemented a plan to send all Indian tribes to reservation camps. The use of the Ranger units kept to be used on occasion on the frontier to fight against “wild” Indians until about the 1920’s when deliberately the force had been reduced due to J.T. Canales and his charges brought about in the 77th legislature. The cavalry assisted the government plan to concentrate and maintain peace amongst the Indians with the confinements of reservation walls. The Rangers however will be remembered by Native American perspective as evil two faced law enforcers and constant violence. Unpremeditated acts of violence against native Indians was the norm amongst Ranger society. In 1846 Texas Rangers killed a sixteen year old nephew of Caddo chief ha-de-bah. They had no excuse for doing so the rangers knew the boy he had been supplying their outpost.⁵⁰ In another incident with rangers it involves a biased interpretation by John O. Loftin at the “Battle of Stone House”. The Kicahi Indians raided Fort Smith which drew the Rangers to Little

⁴⁹ Ibid, 276.

⁵⁰ Texas Beyond History, *Twenty Years Without A Home, 1936- 1859*,
<http://www.texasbeyondhistory.net/tejas/voices/without.html>

River were the incited battle during peace negotiations as a Ranger named Felix McClusky jumped on one of them and killed him.”⁵¹

It was clear that a ranger at close or relatively near was a threat to natives Indians in Texas. The relationship between Texas Rangers and Native Indians of the state was a thin one. The Texas Rangers were in charge of pursuing Comanche and killing them at will as well other tribes of Indians. The ranger symbolized to the natives a sign of ruthless blood shed and murderers of their relatives. The relationships established between the two distinct cultures was a shaky one. The Indians of the Texas were not going to give up their lands without a fight. The Anglo-Settlers were not going to allow Karankawas or any other tribe for that matter to prey on their settlements and small scattered colonies along the vast territory of Texas. If the relationship between natives and settlers was strained, the situation with the Texas Rangers and Indians was even more tense due to actual face to face encounters that usually involved violence and death.

It would be unfair to say that all Texas Rangers hated Indians and Mexicans, or that they were all men of bad moral character. There were those rangers that personified the courage and valor Prescott Webb so much talked about in his Texas Ranger historical interpretation. The prime example of that ranger that was a man that symbolized true law and order is that of Captain John. R. Hughes. Captain John R. Hughes was a ranger that was committed to the safe keeping of his community. Captain John R. Hughes was in charge of the Ysleta Ranger regiment.⁵² The primary duty of this ranger regiment in El Paso was that in safe keeping the border. They were involved in small skirmishes with bandits from the other side of the border. While commanding a group in Ysleta he

⁵¹ John O. Loftin, *Battle Of Stone House*, <http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/article/ss/bts3.html>

⁵² John R. Hughes, *Manuscript Collection 236, Box 14. 1905 to 1955*

received multiple awards and recognition for his outstanding service. He kept the rangers out of any real big problem since the earlier days of the El Paso Salt Wars. In the El Paso Salt wars two rangers were killed along side Chas H. Howard after the infamous troubles arose due to the salt deposits 60 miles northward.⁵³

It is important to realize that during Captain John R. Hughes command of the ranger regiment in Ysleta, he was able to keep stability and peace in the El Paso region during the early 1900's. During his command at about the same period all the "bad" Rangers were committing atrocities to Mexican-Americans along the southern valley of Texas. The stability in the region of El Paso could have been in relation to the just and correct law applied to all citizens. The other reason could have been due to the large population of Hispanics in the region and their strong ties with one another. Presumably it could be said that John R. Hughes wasn't confined to racist tendencies while those others that committed severe crimes against Indians and Mexicans did.

The mentality of the ranger could best be described as a matter of variation and personal experience. Those rangers that actually served honorably like Captain John R. Hughes left a good impression in their communities. The rangers that acted like heathens left an incriminating trail of documents and narratives which ultimately led to the reduction of force after the Mexican Revolution. Alcoholism, vengeance, or racism which ever the motif for the Rangers atrocious and crude behavior should not have to be justified by any one. Despite all scripted evidence the only way to seriously understand those rangers is through proper psychoanalysis. Those that were involved in these acts are the only ones to know the reasons for their actions, not Prescott Webb or Julian Samora.

⁵³ George W. McCrary, *El Paso Troubles in Texas: Letter from the Secretary of War*. Ex. Doc. No. 93 May 2, 1878.

The fact of the matter is how are we to know that Indians and Mexicans were not racist themselves against Anglo-Settlers infringing on their territories.

Looking at the deep implications between the relationships of three distinct civilizations it is obvious that land was the main factor to their disputes, The Indian wars and the Mexican-American war. Land was clearly indicative of human need for survival or just a bi product of weak government budget planning which increased the sell of land in the late 1800's. Racism was clearly indicative of Anglo need to hate its fellow man. It was only natural for conflict between three different civilizations to become that of violence. Two of the three distinct groups excluding the Indian, arrived to Texas as there own unique culture. Their physical appearances were very different and humans are usually very uneasy with new concepts and ideas, in this case even more of a difference due to tone of skin. Regardless of their race they all had within their races people who were mentally not able to adapt to change. Their inability to coexist prohibited any sort of peaceful unification. The ethnic wars in Texas were imminent from the very beginning. The focus placed on the Texas Rangers as lawless vandals should also be applied to the revolutionist of Mexico and the Warriors of the Indian tribes. All these entities were guilty of human bloodshed despite their position of being victims of one another. History should be looked at from a viewpoint of "what can we learn from it?".

The history that is to be learned from a minor topic such as the Texas Rangers in a broad subject such as Texas History is abundant. The education system should implement what they preach in section 113.33 no.24 (b), under social studies. "Analyze information by sequencing, categorizing, identifying cause and effect relationships, comparing, contrasting, main idea, summarizing, making generalizations

and predictions, and drawing inferences and conclusions”.⁵⁴ It was clear that if Mr. Benton would have abided by such rules, which he couldn't due to that fact that the regulations were after his time, he could have covered a detailed history of Texas's ethnic wars with the introduction of a specific topics like “Indians, Mexican Revolutionaries, or Texas Rangers”. He's perspective of history caused a serious lapse in my knowledge and understanding of the real concept behind the history of the Texas Ranger. If he would not of have been so biased in his interpretation history would have become more “factual” than “actual”. Meaning if he would have been thorough in his own historical lesson, he's interpreted history would not have been so actual in my own historical interpretation of the Texas Ranger.

This situation of biased interpretations in the education system undermines authenticity in historical development and understanding. I firmly believe that it hinders the historical awareness and critical thinking patterns of developing students. The simple aspect of teaching history in chronological sequence is practical but does not promote or challenge the students. Methods that involve the incorporation of distinct interpretations of interrelated specific history of cultures should be implemented. Academically discussing and relaying history should involve Native American interpretation and the traditional history already being taught on the continuous battles between Rangers and Comanche's. This would induce a cyclical discussion that would involve the student to debate and reflect on that particular historical incident of Native Americans and Texas Rangers. This would develop a deeper concept in understanding history under unbiased information. Instead of choosing sides and justifying history you learn history without

⁵⁴Texas Education Agency State Regulation, *Chapter 113 Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills for Social Studies*, 1998 sec 113.33 b no.4 <http://www.tea.state.tx.us/rules/tac/chapter113/ch113c.html>

becoming judgmental and a bi-product of biased history. Regardless of the outcomes what happened already occurred. Why should so much history be concealed? History should be informative not secluded from the facts.

The Texas Education Agency should shift focus on how history is being taught and what should be taught. The preparation for students in the state of Texas is completely substandard. I recall receiving high grades in my history classes throughout my primary education. I just can not fathom the thought of how bad those that did not do as well faired in their college history courses. If I was bad off due to misconstrued history over the Texas Rangers how bad off are the rest of the students in the state of Texas on more important historical issues. Educating students with important historical facts is important so they could better understand their world and how societies developed. That way they can better understand themselves.

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