

Paul Espinoza, Producer, *The Lemon Grove Incident*. Video/Film. (San Diego: KPBS-TV, 1985). 16mm Rental, \$95.00; Purchase, \$895.00. Video, \$595.00. Order from: Cinema Guild, 1697 Broadway, New York, NY 10019. (212) 246-5522.

The Lemon Grove Incident is a compelling and informative presentation of how the members of the local school board in Lemon Grove, California, attempted to implement *de jure* segregation of American citizens of Mexican American descent in 1930. The narratives of actual participants—victims in the incident—enhance the authenticity of the presentation and guide the viewer through the convoluted Machiavelianism of the Lemon Grove School Board and its supporting satellites, the Lemon Grove Parent Teacher Association (PTA) and Chamber of Commerce as well as the federal government.

At the advent of the 1930s, racism and ethnocentrism constituted the driving principles behind America's racial and political practices. Motivated by President Hoover's repatriation policy,¹ as well as the President's and organized labor's attribution of the high unemployment problem of the Mexican-American population, the local school board in Lemon Grove, California, voted to force school segregation on its Chicano citizens through tactics of intimidation in December of 1930. This decision was aided by the Lemon Grove PTA and the town's Chamber of Commerce. Working victims were threatened with layoff and imprisonment if they protested. Additionally, welfare and public agencies were notified of non-cooperating parents who were warned that unless they agreed to send children to segregated schools the parents would be stricken from the welfare rolls.

Neither the fear of losing their jobs and welfare benefits nor the threat of arrest and deportation deterred the Mexican community in its struggle against the school board's proposal. The Mexican American community aborted the school board's proposal to segregate Chicano youth by blocking its tactic through court litigation, and winning a decision in the case of Robert Alvarez *vs.* Lemon Grove School Board. In that case, the California Superior Court decided that the School Board did not have the power to establish and maintain a separate school just for Mexicans. As a result of the protests by a unified community acting as LaRaza, the Mexican American youth of Lemon Grove never did attend a separate school. Equally important, the Lemon Grove case helped to defeat the Bliss Bill in the California Legislature which attempted to redefine Mexicans as Indians so they could be legally segregated.

The appalling actions of the Lemon Grove School Board attest to an often unrecognized truism about democracy—that the decisions of the majority are too often rooted in subjective reasoning. The school board's explicitly stated reasons for initiating the proposal to segregate Mexican youth were that these children were the cause of overcrowdedness and contributed to unsanitary conditions in the schools.

Regarding the impact of Chicano youth on the health and welfare of the white populace, a California educator observed in 1920:

One of the demands made from a community in which there is a large Mexican population is for separate schools. The reason for this demand is based on the theory that the Mexican is a menace to the health and morals of the rest of the community.¹

Clearly, these values, beliefs, and attitudes remain operative in contemporary America.

—Freddy Dean
Pomona, CA

¹The repatriation policy was a presidentially-advocated program in which Mexican Americans who did not volunteer to return to their country of ancestry were deported—forced to return to Mexico regardless of citizenship status.

²Albert Camarillo, *A History of Mexican Americans in California: Chicanos in California*, (San Francisco: Boyd and Frasser Publishing Company, 1984) 44.

Joe R. Feagin and Clairece Booher Feagin. *Discrimination American Style; Institution Racism and Sexism*. 2nd edition. (Malabar, FL: Robert E. Krieger Publishing Company, 1986) xiii, 246 pp., \$7.95 paper.

Discrimination American Style seeks to answer two basic questions: “Why do women, blacks, and other minorities experience discrimination in the United States?” and “What types of discriminatory behaviors continue in practice today?” Feagin and Feagin attempt to integrate existing research on issues of racism and sexism which focuses on the overall theme of institutional discrimination. They examine similarities and differences between racist and sexist behaviors and practices in order to determine whether or not discrimination exists, and if so, to what degree. They reject the popular belief that prejudice and bigotry are causes of discrimination and argue that practices which often appear to be “neutral” may in fact be evidence of indirect or subtle institutional discrimination.

The book, originally published in 1978, provides an overview of race and sex discrimination. It places a heavy emphasis on several legal-administration issues. The senior author was a scholar-in-residence with the United States Civil Rights Commission during 1974-75. Several chapters address topics such as employment, housing, education, social services, politics, and the court system with respect to discrimination as