

TABE Raw Footage 2007

Interview with Dr. Guadalupe San Miguel, Jr.

Professor at the University of Houston

Interviewer: “and of course the future... I’m asking every one of the people I’m interviewing.
(Can’t make out the rest of what he’s asking)

Dr. Guadalupe San Miguel, Jr.: As Josue González mentions, and I quote him in my book, I think that, we’re in a different kind of world, where new forms of bilingualism are going to emerge that are not tainted with the highly politicized nature of bilingual education of the past. And what we’re gonna see is the emergence of much more positive forms of bilingual education; enrichment bilingual education, two way bilingual education, dual language.

All of these new forms, get at that issue, and move beyond simply just providing English Language instruction for language minority children. It expands the debate towards moving in a direction where all Americans learn multiple languages. And again, it goes back even to the issue of national identity.

How do you define an American? And these new forms of bilingualism are going to redefine what an American is. And that new definition is going to be one that is appreciative of cultural differences and is multilingual and respects different languages and seeks to learn the different languages because we live in a global economy and we can’t isolate ourselves anymore from the rest of the world.

Interviewer: (difficult to hear him) Do you see the rebirth, or the resurrection of bilingual education, especially since the 60s?

Man: I think there were several; there were at least five major factors that contributed to this. One that is usually not mentioned, by individuals, I think the role of the activist scholars was crucial. And by the activist scholars, I mean that in the early 60s, there were several individuals, Joshua Fishman comes to mind, that had for decades, done research on bilingualism- fought for foreign language instruction in the schools. It was called the FLES movement, the Foreign Languages in Elementary Schools. They fought for legislation, in the National Defense and Education Act, Federal legislation in the late 50s, to ensure that monies went for language instruction and for the training of language teachers.

These individuals had a history of three, four decades of participating at the national level, at the local level at the state level, in support for the uses of Non-English Languages in the public schools and they became crucial in laying some of the major arguments that were used in bilingual education. As part of that, you also had the research on bilingualism, of the late 50s, and early 50s, that became crucial in laying some of the basic arguments, and some of this

research for instance, it was in 2 basic areas, that were very useful. One, is that prior to the 60s, prior to 1960, most of the research in the literature had indicated that bilingualism was a deficit in learning, and that it played a negative role in learning among children.

The new research indicated that bilingualism actually was an asset in learning and that children that were bilingual, were brighter, they had better test scores, achieved on test scores, and so that kind of research laid the groundwork for throwing a positive light on bilingualism. How it was not an obstacle to success, but actually a facilitator. That was one type of research around bilingualism, the other that Joshua Fishman and others did was basic research on the number of people that were speaking non-English languages in the United States and his major report that was finally published in 1970, but the draft came out in 1960 indicated that the number of people speaking a language other than English had been increasing, since the 2nd world war. The image in the United States was that it was decreasing; the idea of the melting pot, that immigrants were coming and they were melting and they were losing their language. Well, he found empirical evidence to indicate that was not true. Among some groups, yes, the non-English languages were decreasing. But among others, it was increasing and the largest group were the Spanish Speakers. In other words, Spanish speaking individuals, the numbers of individuals speaking Spanish, was increasing over time. And that sort of made a big crack in the melting pot theory that indicated, you know, that ethnicity was not a major role in American society. It indicated the opposite, that ethnic groups were not melting, and that ethnic groups were maintaining their language and culture.

And that led to a whole series of articles and research projects, around identity and around assimilation and success, and achievement that was wonderful in raising new questions about language and culture in the schools. So, one was the activism of these scholars, the other was the research in bilingualism, and then there were at least 3 other factors that became important. One of course, was the role of the federal government. The federal government, beginning in the early 1960s, became actively involved in two areas, one in poverty. It issued a lot of poverty legislation. And of course the most important piece, for public schools was the Elementary and Secondary education act of 1965. But it was also developing legislation in other areas, for example, the Higher Education act, that provided monies for minority students to go to college, for working class individuals to go to college, for the development of upward bound programs that provided funding for universities. Like myself, I went to school on the basis of some of these upward bound programs. So federal legislation and involvement in trying to solve the problems of poverty became crucial because new research emerged in looking at the role that poverty played in achievement. Of course while the majority of that work was in the area of African-Americans, living primarily in poor neighborhoods and Ghettos, other scholars began to write about other groups that were living in poverty, especially the Spanish speaking groups. So new articles emerged, were written about the Puerto Ricans in New York, the Puerto Ricans and the Mexicans living in Chicago, and the Southwest. So poverty became a key mechanism for raising these issues and moving beyond the issue of black white relations in this

legislation. The black civil rights movement also became important because it raised important issues about discrimination, discrimination on the basis of race and the NAACP and the Urban League and many other groups that were involved in fighting for equal rights for African-American's began to raise the issue of the role of institutional discrimination in the denial of opportunities.

Now, granted the majority of that work was based on the notion that discrimination was only based on race. But scholars began to extend that dialogue and argued that discrimination was also based on other factors other than race, especially culture and language- and you began to see emergence of articles around the role that discrimination against language groups like the Spanish Speaking, the Puerto Ricans the Mexican Americans, the role that the structural exclusion of the Mexican-American community from school board positions, from teaching, the discrimination that Mexican-American children experience in schools, because of their Mexican ancestry, see, all of those kinds of studies emerged and you had a new dialogue around the issue of discrimination on the basis of color, I mean class, I mean culture and language. So the black civil rights movement, the poverty legislation and even the Chicano movement at that point in the late 60's. It raised the Chicano movement, it raised issues about pride in ethnicity and raised questions about, not only are we being discriminated as we, Mexican-Americans, not only are we being discriminated, in the larger society, but our language is also being repressed. And you see it through the no-Spanish speaking rules, the English speaking rules, the devaluation of culture in the schools, the demeaning of Mexican children in the schools. And so part of that Chicano movement effort is to resurrect pride in being of Mexican heritage and speaking your own language. So that added to the dynamics around bilingual education and it raised questions about bilingual education maybe being able to promote language maintenance as one of its goals, in addition to school achievement. So all of these factors, poverty legislation, the black civil rights movement, the Chicano movement research and bilingualism, the activism of these scholars that have been involved for decades- all of these individuals and contextual factors laid the groundwork, for the arguments in support of bilingual education and helped mobilize people, different groups, from different areas, in support of a specific bill, that would begin to deal systematically with those problems, and that was of course, the enactment of bilingual education act of 1968.

Interviewer: In your book, Dr. San Miguel, you mention the fact that NABE was relatively quiet and not as aggressive as the organization had been in the past in either supporting, you know, legislation in support of language minority children or opposing those pieces of legislation, you know, that are detrimental to our kids. An aggressive type of response, is not evident you know, when they, Congress was debating the No Child Left Behind and that may have contributed to the fact that Bilingual Education was purged you know from the legislation. No mention made of, as you said, about bilingual Ed, about the policies that resulted. What lessons were learned from that experience that might be helpful to us here in Texas as a state organization advocating language minority children as we prepare for the upcoming session of

the legislature in January? Where maybe similar type of legislation may be introduced, again taking the que from...

Dr. Guadalupe San Miguel: I think there are several lessons we can learn from that. One is that, I think we need to realize that the policy making process in general and bilingual education policy in particular, is a, intimately related to politics, to the political process, and we need to understand that, and become familiar with what that political process is so that we can effectively intervene and act on behalf of the children and the parents we speak for. Even in today's world, for instance when I still talk to educators and especially bilingual teachers many of them don't seem to be interested in that political process, I mean, the idea that they have to write to their legislators, they have to take a stand, and say that a position that's being looked at is, detrimental to the education of children because they are the experts in that area. But they actually have to do that themselves and contact their legislators. Not only just federal legislators, Congressmen and Congresswomen, but also state legislators and local legislators in terms of school board members. So I think, we need to emphasize again this good education, in terms of bilingual education is intimately related to politics, and we need to become aware of that process so that we can participate more effectively.

Secondly I think we need to become aware, as I lay out in the book, that the reason why we have bilingual education in the shape that it took, was because there were individuals that were committed to getting involved beyond the classroom and we are all busy, teachers we know, have tremendous duties and responsibilities in the schools, and it's difficult you know, to think that they have to be involved outside of the classroom, but that is the only way that bilingual education emerged. When people went beyond the classroom, and took the time to struggle for a particular program, and so we have to find a way to recommit ourselves to doing that in as many ways as we can. I'm not saying that all teachers need to do that, I'm saying that everybody can contribute in different ways, and the organization for example, TABE can find a way to make it easier through the use of the internet, where they can quickly inform the members, and then the members can just click in, and that can send a message to state legislators, or national legislators. I mean there are, the technology is there for increased involvement, by teachers, administrators, supervisors, principals and others, including parents to ensure that we have the kinds of successful programs that we need. And then I think we also need to point out the lesson that when we talk about bilingual education, we're really talking also, in many respects, about values, the values we cherish in American society. We know that we want programs that are good for children, but the programs are not neutral.

The programs imply a value, about language and culture and ethnicity and we want good programs, and we want effective programs. But we also value bilingualism, and pluralism, and so what we need to do is we need to ensure that those kinds of programs are there for all children because all children need to be growing up with fluency in more than one language. It increases their horizons, it increases their opportunities – it increases their sensitivities to

different cultures. So I think we need to become aware in many respects we are talking about values, and we have to clarify what those values are because some individuals do not support pluralism. Some individuals do not want to redefine what America means. Some individuals do not want to accept the realities of multiculturalism and multilingualism. This is the reality of the United States. So when we talk about a good bilingual program, or a good program for these children, we're also talking about values, and when we talk about values, we also need to understand others will take a different view of that and so that means we have to be engaged in struggle because we have to convince others, and persuade others that our values are the more appropriate value for the kind of society that we have or the kind of society that we want.

Interviewer: Lastly, why should bilingual educators read your book?

Man: Well, I think they should read the book, because again, it illustrates many of these things that I've been talking about, but most of all it shows how bilingual education is a contested arena. It is something that we have to fight for. It is not something that is going to be given to us. Educators are not gonna develop these programs out of the goodness of their hearts. It is something we have to struggle for and we have to convince others of the necessity of these programs. Now, a lot of times you don't have to convince many of my generation that these programs are needed because we have the experience. We know that English-only instruction doesn't work. Many of us went to these English-only schools, and no Spanish-speaking rules, and many of us were punished or we know of friends that were punished. I mean I had a lot of friends that were expelled; I was expelled temporarily from school, because I spoke Spanish when I was a senior in High School, and we know what impact those policies had on us, as individuals. The research now has shown that not only do these kinds of policies help promote greater sensitivity to different cultures, and help us learn a second language, but it also shows, that they are more effective in teaching children. Especially if you want to teach them English. I mean, practically all the research, it doesn't matter if you are only looking at the United States, you can look at research internationally, in other countries and research has shown, for the most part, you know, quality, bilingual programs, are the fastest and most effective means to teach a second language to children.

So just an effectiveness issue alone, we should support this program. But there are other issues involved, and I think the book tries to show, and illustrate the complexities of the involvement of all of these groups and what kinds of values they had in fighting for either the support of bilingual education or in opposition to bilingual ed., and it shows a different side to bilingual education that most of us are not taught in the schools. We're usually taught to look at education as a neutral instrument, and we're not taught to look at education as a political instrument, and if we read the book, and get that better understanding, hopefully, it'll lead to discussions of how can we be more effective educators in our classroom, by becoming more actively involved in supporting these quality programs.

Interviewer: Excellent. Ok sir; is there anything else you'd like to add?

Man: No, I think those are very good questions that you asked me, and I just wanna thank you for the opportunity to be able to answer them.

Interviewer: Well thank you.

Next Interview

Carlos Kevin Blanton

Blanton: Is the camera rolling all the time, or do we pause, or?

Interviewer: Yes we just keep on rolling, we do an editing job and pieces of your, of the interview, are going to be scattered, different parts. (*Blanton:* Oh, okay.) Like for example you're going to be talking about the future of bilingual ed., I kind of envision that being toward the end. (*Blanton:* Yeah) And the future of bilingual ed. This part we are talking about you know the early history, you know that's going to be towards the front. You know, before we actually introduce where you'll be at, what I call the reemergence or rebirth of bilingual education. So, I'll give you some ideas to how this is going to be formatted.

Blanton: Okay, so we just go in order.

Interviewer: So, yeah so whenever, yeah. Okay so the first question. Carlos, well we want for you to kind of give us your name first for us to show it underneath you on the video. And your rank at Texas A&M University and all those kinds of things. We want to make sure we get it right today.

Blanton: Okay, okay, well my name is Carlos Kevin Blanton, I have a doctorate, from Rice University and I teach at Texas A&M University, where I am an assistant professor. It's my fourth year, starting my fourth year there, and I spent two years at Portland State University in a Chicano Latino Studies program, so that was a wonderful experience, but it's good to be back in Texas, where I'm a native.

Interviewer: Read your book, Great deal of interest, but I'm still going through it, because I just discovered it, two weeks ago so I'm hoping that the questions I'm going to be asking, Carlos, are of interest in bilingual education and then beyond that, what influenced you to write "The Strange Case" or *The Strange Career of Bilingual Education*?

Blanton: Well, that really is a good question because often times I have students ask me, "Why have you spent 6-7 years, working on one little topic, a narrow topic, when you could be writing the history of the world, or something that seems a little more, something that people would actually buy?". I have family, I have familia that ask me all the time, when I'm gonna write a book on the civil war, cause you know that would sell, and they'd see it at the bookstores and

things like that. But originally I got into this topic because of family-history, because of family stories.

When I was a graduate student at Rice University, I read a book that I thought was really wrong, about bilingual education, I thought it was a horrible book. It was ignorant of the facts, it was biased, it was just poor, poor work, and this was from one of the more established historians in American education and political history, and so when I wrote my review my advisor asked me, 'Well, What makes you think you know more,' and I said, 'well, my people lived it. My family lived it.' My mother's gente, from South Texas, and they did bilingual education through the 19th century and 20th century. My grandmother and her mother and their family and the ranch in San Diego, Texas, they were involved with all of this stuff, even with my mother, in the 1940's was involved in a very rudimentary, kind of transitional quasi-bilingual program in San Diego when she was a school girl. And I said, 'it's not just them, it's my father's people that also went through it.' My father's part German, and his German side of the family, they went to German schools in South Coastal Texas- Where Columbus is, in that area- they went to bilingual schools there all before World War I, in fact before World War I, they were educated mostly in German. It's only after the war they went to the public schools, and were educated in English.

So for me, I knew all of these facts, but they were facts that were not contained in any book, they were facts that I couldn't find by going to the library, looking it up on the internet. So I sort of knew that there was something there, and my professor, my advisor said well you seem to know more than anyone else I've ever talked to, why don't you research it and come back and see what happens. And sure enough, I came back with a mass of books and articles and materials and I decided right there and then, this would've been, probably 1997, that I was going to write a dissertation on Bilingual Education, and five-hundred and something pages later, I had it. Four years later, it was done, and that's the genesis of what's become this book, *The Strange Career*.

Interviewer: Many People, including policy makers have the misconception that bilingual education or the instruction in a language other than English is a relatively new concept or development. An outcome of the civil rights movement or the influence of the federal government. Your book just offers, you know, very thorough and comprehensive documentation about the early years of bilingual education or what you call the early bilingual tradition in Texas. Could you talk about these early programs, Carlos, how you alluded to some of the, those early relationships or your discussions that you had with your family. Was it Tejanos, or Czechs, or Germans or Polish?

Blanton: Absolutely. One of the biggest issues that I was fighting against as a historian, is that you know all of the- historians are always taught try to write objectively, leave bias outside the door, and I was making a claim that simply hadn't existed in most previous literature. So I was sort of, a very early voice in saying this, and I hope that more voices follow, and more people

pick up the research because I couldn't do it all, I pick representative samples throughout the state, and I hope more people continue it. But the issue I was fighting was that Bilingual Education is a creature of the Great Society in the 1960's. There's this ingrained attitude that this is Chicanismo, this is the 60's, this is all things associated with the 60's, and it is a modern invention. In my research I found that it wasn't a modern invention, English-only, was the invention in the early 20th century - late 19th century that displaced what had been this flourishing tradition of bilingual education. A very rudimentary kind of bilingual education, I call it the bilingual tradition. I try not to let it get too confused with the modern bilingual education we have today, that is a little more sophisticated, obviously has a great deal more professionalism behind it, science behind it.

But, some of the programs in the 19th century were actually quite sophisticated themselves. So that's one of the big issues that I've been fighting and what I've found is that the bilingual tradition *car alarm goes off, quick break* you want me to hold off a little bit.

So one of the issues that I'm finding, is that, this notion of Bilingual Education as a creature of the 60's, and in my work *The Strange Career of Bilingual Education*, I've found that in the 19th century, in Texas, particularly after the civil war, Bilingual Education flourished. But it was a very localized, informal, almost a casual tradition and practice. There were laws that required the teaching of English, but nothing that outlawed the teaching of Spanish or German or any other language. It was very legally obscure, and what else I found is that it was generally community based. Bilingual education happened because local community members wanted their own schools for their own children, and they wanted some control over what the children were taught in the schools. They wanted some control over language, over curriculum, over content, over the hiring and firing of teachers.

This allowed through part of the 19th century, German's in certain towns and areas to preserve German schools, Czechs to preserve Czech schools, and Tejanos to preserve Tejano schools. The great strength of this tradition was that it was sort of very legally obscure, and the fact that in Texas, early education wasn't very professionalized, there was really no bureaucracy that over saw anything; it was sort of the wild west, of education policy and what happened is that as the teacher core becomes more professionalized, as you develop a state agency, that regulates more on local decisions, as you have schools in Texas move away from the old common schools, and towards the district system, which is what we have now, which is more tightly controlled from Austin. As you have this increase in professionalization, and centralization, and bureaucratization, they do what professionals, and bureaucrats, and regulators do, they make rules, and one of the rules that comes out of this progressive era renaissance of reform, was English-only. So English-only is created in the 1890's, and it becomes law in the 1900's, and becomes an even stronger law in the 19-teens. And this is what displaces the informal, loose, casual bilingual tradition.

This bilingual tradition, it captured almost every conceivable ethnic group you could think of, not just in Texas but across the country. There are studies in rural Minnesota, in Wisconsin, in urban areas in Missouri, studies in Louisiana, of course New Mexico and other parts of the country. You have bilingual education functioning everywhere else, not just in Texas. Particularly here in Texas, the groups you are mostly looking at are Tejanos. You're looking at German speakers, and you're also looking at Czechs as well as other smaller groups in smaller numbers, like the Dutch and the Poles and some other groups that are also involved.

Interviewer: You talk about the *escuelitas* in here, in your book. Will you tell us a bit more about the *escuelitas*? You know, about how they came about and maybe something about the curriculum?

Blanton: Well the best source on *escuelitas* is still I think, Emilo Zamora's, *World of the Mexican Worker*, where he really talks about the *escuelita* mindset and the schools and the curriculum and the teachers. From my perspective the *escuelitas* are very important, because they're evidence of Tejanos, who are unsatisfied, and as Mexican-immigrants, who are unsatisfied with the public schools, because by this point in time, in the 19-teens, and the 1920's, Texas had moved towards English-only, and in doing so they essentially really counted out a large part of the non-English speaking population. Which in South Texas, their Tejanos and Mexican immigrants, and the *escuelitas* reinforce pride, identity, a Mexicanist Identity, but they also teach English, they just happen to also teach Spanish. Many of these *escuelitas* were bilingual, and they did not necessarily neglect English, but Spanish was certainly placed at a level of importance, that the parents felt that the public schools should put. And at one point in time in the 19th century, public schools did put Spanish, on something of a pedestal.

I have testimony in the book from county superintendents, and county judges, all over south Texas who basically say, that unless they can teach Spanish in the schools, as a language, unless they can hire teachers, sometimes from México, that speak the language of the children, that speak the language of the parents, there's no hope for ever teaching English. And this is all over south Texas. And the school super intendants that brag about instituting English-only, as one of the reforms when they came into office, also mention that they can't get kids to come to school. They can't get the parents to come to school. This is why the *escuelitas* form. They're there to soak up those students and those students' parents who became very dissatisfied with the public schools.

Interviewer: And these were schools that were organized by community groups, the parents, and social structure?

Blanton: Right, sometimes organized by *Muchalistas*, sometimes organized by other groups. Sometimes organized by bands of parents that would get together. Often time's tuition was either very very cheap, or non-existent. These schools did the most with what they can. Sometimes, they hired teachers from Mexico, to come and teach in the United States to make

sure that the children didn't lack for their appreciation of Mexican culture. Again, we think of multicultural education. We think of researching ones family roots and ethnicity and ancestry, we think of Chicano pride, we think of the 1960s. And yet this is a theme that runs throughout the 19th and early 20th centuries in Texas history.

Interviewer: I think you've alluded, you know, to this emergence of bilingual Ed in the 1960s given that we had, you know, this demise or almost demise of bilingual Ed, you know as a result of the attitudes and policies that we had in the early part of the 20th century? What are some of the factors that contribute to that rebirth?

Blanton: Well, the rebirth, I think is a profound moment in American history in the 1950's and the 1960's, when several different things came together. It would be wrong to just assign the birth of bilingual education to someone like Lyndon Johnson, who probably had very little idea about what it was all about, or to assign it to this person or that person. Bilingual education came together, because different communities in the United States came together. There was the Mexican-American community, which was becoming much more activist, which was becoming much more frustrated, at years of failing schools, at years of their children failing in schools, at years of discrimination never being taken care of, and segregation still existing despite the court victories in the 50's and the 40's. The *Bastrop v Delgado* (found as *Delgado v Bastrop*-1948), the *Driscoll Hernandez* (found as *Hernandez v Driscoll CISD*-1957), and all these other important cases. The *Mendez* case in California (found as *Mendez v Westminster School District of Orange County et al*-1946)- all these victories, and yet segregation didn't change. And so the Mexican American community and we often times think of LULACers, and GI forum members as being a little bit more conservative of the Mexican-American generation. Actually this is the vanguard, for what eventually would become the Chicano movement of the 1960's because they're fed up, and they're not gonna take it anymore by the late 1950's and early 1960's. They agitate for reform. They want reform. It's very clear that they want some sort of substantive change. A couple other things occur.

In a different, completely different part of the universe, pedagogical scientists, people who work with language and children, people who are clinical psychologists, child psychologists, people who are linguists, came together and all realized by the 1960's, that the previous decades work on bilingualism linked to mental retardation, was false. And the scientific community came to regard "hey, kids are smarter when they're bilingual." Bilingualism allows children to master more topics, faster than mono-lingual children if properly structured and properly done. This is the bedrock of the scientific research on bilingual education today. Very good, very valid, needed improvement over somewhat racist studies before that linked bilingualism to mental retardation which essentially takes an entire segment of the American population, and just throws them away into the dust bin. So these two communities, come to support bilingual education for very different reasons- like pincers, they come at the same time, they meet on

the same ground, and whose standing at that ground? This is where Lyndon Johnson, this is where the Great Society comes in.

The Great Society, and the reforms of the Great Society in the 1960's, enabled the academic community and the Mexican-American activist community to come together and create, recreate really when you look at the history, bilingual education. Except do it in a much more formal, legislative, legally sanctioned manner than had ever existed before. What they did is they took this bilingual tradition, and they codified it into law, and they created something new out of it, and that was an incredible moment. You can't really give one group credit over any other group because they were all important. Interestingly enough, the Johnson administration wasn't really that sold on bilingual education. In the documents that I found, the internal memos, its actual difficult to find them, talking about the pedagogical value of bilingual education. They were worried about politics. They knew they needed something for Chicanos. They needed something to satisfy the community because people like George Sanchez, people like Hector P. Garcia, Ed Roybal, they were all upset and they all wanted change. And the problem with the history, the way it's been written, the historians who are political historians primarily, they look at those documents and the first thing that comes to their mind is, "Oh well. This is all political. This is just cobbled together by the administration to satisfy ethnic militants." But the problem with those political historians is that part of the political narrative doesn't take into account this herculean effort by the Mexican-American activist community, the LULACers, the GI Forums, as well as the academic-scientific community that also came around at the same time. So it's sort of a coming together of a lot of different events.

Interviewer: You mention George Sanchez, Carlos, and I notice that you're doing a biography?

Blanton: That's what I'm working on, yes.

Interviewer: On George Sanchez? You know... how important and significant was George Sanchez's impact in terms of the education of Mexican-Americans?

Blanton: In terms of education, George Sanchez from the 1930's to the 1960's, while he was alive, was simply the forefront – the foremost scholar, Mexican-American education that existed. I mean, he was the person to go to. No one knew as much as he did. No one had as much * doesn't finish his sentence*

Interviewer: Alright so yeah the demise, that's important, and then we have programs in the early 1900s, and now we're going to (unclear).

Blanton: Ok.... so the demise first? Well the demise of bilingual education happens from several different interrelated factors that sort of negatively come together very late in the 19th century and early 20th century. Progressive education is one big one. By progressive education I mean the professionalization of teaching, the professionalization of education, the development of education administrators, regulators in Austin, over-seeing local education efforts, overseeing

curriculum, Textbooks, content- all of these things are good. You need these things in a modern society.

All of these modernizing tendencies are wonderful, the problem, for the bilingual tradition, which was very informal, and sort of “in between the lines” in the 19th century, is that once you develop these rules and regulations you create an apparatus that can take away bilingual education, just as you can create one that gives bilingual education back, and in the late 19th century there was great deal of Nativism. There were a lot of people in American society who were very fearful of all immigrants, not just Tejanos, but Germans, Czechs, anyone who didn’t speak English. And so as part of this Americanization movement, which is another factor that comes into it, progressive education provides the bureaucratic impetus to eradicate locally, local bilingual education programs that bubbled up, from the grass roots.

So progressive education provides the policy and the intellectual context. Americanization provides that negative, ugly, harsh, bigoted, racist, prejudiced, attitude- that ideology of racism, sort of uses this paradigm of progressivism to hijack bilingual education and to stamp it out of existence through the English-only laws, and then finally the English-only movement, which was actually a movement of academics, centered in Columbia Teachers College, centered in Washington D.C, all over the country. These academics were questioning the old, ancient, bilingual methods of teaching languages. Throughout the 19th, 18th, heck since the middle ages, all these centuries, languages were taught dually. You learned one language, by filtering it through yours; it was a matter of translation. It was called the Grammar Translation Method and what happens eventually is that these scholars decide that it’s too cumbersome. We’ve got all these immigrant children in schools, the schools were overcrowded, the teachers don’t speak the languages of these seven or eight different nationalities that are in the classroom. We need something simpler, and that’s when they invent English-only; a kind of immediate emersion program where the thinking was if you just speak English long enough, like osmosis, it’s going to sink in sooner or later. What happened was that it sank in for some, and others simply dropped out and got out of school as soon as they could. So it did absolutely nothing for the literacy rate really, but a lot of these early schools in the 19th and early 20th centuries weren’t as concerned as we are now, making sure that everyone is educated. It was a factory, industrial society. It wasn’t a high tech society that we have now. So yes, Progressive education, Americanization, and then the English-only movement sort of all combined to eradicate these early instances of the bilingual tradition. They don’t kill it off forever, bilingualism continues in private schools that can’t be really regulated against because it will become a separation of church and state issue, for the states to mandate curriculum from private schools, whether they be Catholic or Lutheran or Baptist or whatever, and this bilingual tradition continues in the few remaining *escuelas* that are around, that dot the landscape all over south Texas.

Interviewer: Could you tell us about George Sanchez, and the impact he made in terms of education, specifically the education of Mexican-Americans?

Blanton: Well, no one person was more important to the education of Mexican Americans in the 20th century than was George I. Sanchez. The famed University of Texas professor and activist. Sanchez was a brilliant mind, he was a brilliant intellectual. I regard Sanchez as the most important Mexican-American Intellectual of that entire Mexican-American generation, from the 1930's to the 1960's – what Mario Garcia in his book writes as the Mexican-American generation. I also regard Sanchez as a model, of academic activism. This is someone who didn't get into the ivory tower and forget where he came from. Sanchez grew up in rural New Mexico and Arizona, he taught in the public schools in New Mexico. When he was 19 and 20 years old, he was a teacher and principle in a little rural school in New Mexico and he never forgot the kids, he never forgot the students. So when he got these academic jobs and he was pulling down thousands and thousands of dollars of grant money from the Rockefeller Foundation, the Carnegie Foundation, from the Julius Rosenwald fund, from the ACLU, and the Robert Marshall Trust. He's pulling these major grants down while he was at the University of Texas and what was he doing with it? He was trying to effect change. He was trying to affect change in the way Mexican-American children were taught. Change in the way teachers were trained to teach Mexican-American children, and also change, fundamental change, through court cases, through law of the discrimination against Mexican American's in all facets of society. He was a renaissance man, and researching him for a future biography has been a real, a great joy over the last few years. It's been really wonderful *break* changed by the late 50's and early 60's.

Interviewer: and he was also a, an expert, a so called expert witness in the (unclear) case

Blanton: That's right.

Interviewer: He was like the Thurgood Marshall, you know, of our community in these legal cases. Given the changing demographics of the state, and the current political climate – No Child Left Behind, etc. – and the effect that that has had on bilingual education in our state?

Blanton: Well I'm worried. Obviously I'm very worried. I feel that whenever politicians take the specific language that talks about bilingual education and they try to fit in under some other rubric, whenever they start these games I worry a great deal because for me, what that does is it makes the legal establishment of Bilingual Education today, fuzzier, and in a certain extent it was never sort of a hard and fast as it needed to be, even in the 70's and 80's. But it makes it a little fuzzier, particularly with No Child Left Behind if I understand it correctly, you know a lot of the specific language in Title VII is just completely ripped out and replaced with hardly anything specific at all, and for me that could be the first step for enterprising politicians that would like to take it away eventually, someday, that maybe feel they can't yet. I hope that's not the case, I hope I'm just being a little paranoid, but I'm worried about the future. I'm not coming at this from just one perspective either; I really do think that bilingual education is a wonderful pedagogical tool. It's not just a sense of empowerment, for Spanish speaking, Hispanic, Latino students, or Asian students, or any other kind of group. It's not just about that, it's about a wonderful opportunity to learn. I think bilingual education is good for everyone, not just this

group or that group in the other. In fact I think we should have bilingual education for everyone, I hope that it's around if I ever have children.

Interviewer: What is *break* take to protect the interest of language minority children and make sure that they are provided with a quality education?

Blanton: Well I think this film, and this documentary, is exactly the kind of thing TABE needs to be doing. TABE needs to remind us, TABE needs to remind us all that bilingual education is something that has value, it's important, it matters to our community, it matters to all communities, and that this is something we need to fight to keep.

Interviewer: Why should we read your book? (unclear) bilingual educators?

Blanton: Well, I hope that in some way, this book will help- I hope that in some way, this book will help bilingual educators understand what they're participating in. They're participating in something that has a long, storied, rich, fascinating history. There's a wonderful story, they're a part of something big, they're a part of something huge, something that's dramatic, that's passionate, that has roots to the founding of these lands- and it's my hope that by giving people this sense of this history, that it will help them. It will help them when they talk about bilingual education to others, it will help them when they teach. If it helps just a few people, or one person, I'll be happy. Ultimately the joy was all mine in writing this book, so I suppose, if no one likes it, then I still had a lot of fun writing it. But I just hope that, that the book helps people realize, that this is important, and they're participating in something that's much, much bigger than some our critics would like us to think. Thanks Rudy.