

Tuesday Topics November 4, 2022 Summary

President Carole Jordan welcomed members and guests. She reminded the audience of the general election on Tuesday, November 8, announced that annual dues are due and can be paid to Allan Foster today or online, congratulated Treasurer Mary Galligan on her great article, announced that KTWU scheduled a debate for candidates for Secretary of State Scott Schwab and Jeana Repass on November 7 at KTWU office at Washburn, and that LWV will host a Happy Hour on December 10, from 5 to 7 p.m. at Terry's Bar and Grill.

Following announcements, President Jordan introduced Julie Mulvihill, Executive Director, Humanities Kansas, who detailed all the projects Humanities Kansas has supported in Topeka. Mulvihill then introduced Dr. Valerie Mendoza, Director of the Title III Grant at Washburn University to present "Beyond Brown: Mexican Struggles for Equality."

Mendoza began by asking what we think about segregation. She then described what her grandparents went through in Topeka after they immigrated from Mexico. For instance, if they bought food from a restaurant, they had to choose "take out" and pick it up at the back door because they weren't allowed in the restaurant. Also, if they wanted to swim in the city pool, they could only swim on the day before the pool would be emptied.

She continued her presentation using a series of slide photos that documented the plight of Mexicans seeking equality and provided examples of what occurred. First, she showed a photo of two drinking fountains, one large one for Whites and a much smaller one for Colored. Another photo showed a sign reading "NO Dogs, Negroes, Mexicans." In a photo of the Nomar Theatre in Wichita, she pointed out the balcony where Mexicans had to sit and noted that Topeka had similar theaters. She then showed a photo of the Branner Elementary School in Topeka, and the annex where Mexican children went to school. Then came desegregation in 1954, following the Supreme Court's landmark decision on *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka*, illustrated by a photo of *The Russell Daily News* headline "Segregation in Schools is Outlawed" from the paper's front page. A Timeline of Resistance visually showed the history of Mexican resistance in the U.S., starting with Saturnino Alvarado (1925) who fought for school integration in Kansas City, followed by the founding of League of Latin American Citizens (LULAC) in Texas (1929), school desegregation in the Lemon Grove Incident in California (1931), desegregation case *Mendez v. Westminster* in Orange County California (1947), and *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka Kansas* (1954).

Mendoza also showed photos of Mexican Railroad Workers, followed by several slides illustrating school segregation in Kansas City, boxcar homes (mural), and the Mexican Village in Dodge City where the school was so dilapidated that it had to be demolished. Mendoza told several stories about schools in Topeka and elsewhere that accepted Mexican students. This included Our Lady of Guadalupe School, which is still in existence, that was staffed by Sisters of Charity, Leavenworth, Kansas. Many Mexican

parents sent their children to Catholic schools instead of the sub-standard public schools for Mexicans.

In 1924 when Kansas City refused to allow four Mexican high school students to attend and integrate a public school, parents contacted the Mexican Consul who responded in a telegram to the Kansas governor asking for help. The governor said it was a matter for the Kansas Department of Education, and KSDE said it was a matter for the local school district. Mendoza said it went back and forth until the students were allowed to attend a public high school. Only three of the students chose to go. All three were proficient in English and graduated from high school; one attended and graduated from Baker University.

Mendoza also showed photos of the Mexican Independence Day Celebration, held in 1964 to celebrate the 147th year of Mexican independence. She mentioned that the student-led resistance in the 1960s, including walk outs by high school students to protest their treatment. In 1990 high school students in Newton, formed the Azteca Spanish Club that later became a dance group.

Following her presentation, Dr. Mendoza entertained many questions from the audience.