

Early to mid-20th-century Eurocentrism in Mexican Education

Karime Borrego, 2027

This research project examined the paradoxical relationship between Mexico's post-revolutionary government (1920-1940) and its Indigenous populations. While officially celebrating Indigenous heritage through art and rhetoric, the government simultaneously implemented education policies that systematically erased living Indigenous cultures. My work sought to understand how these contradictory approaches coexisted and what they reveal about nation-building processes in modern Mexico.

To investigate, I employed a multi-method approach over several months of study. I analyzed primary sources including government education decrees, school inspection reports, and speeches by officials like José Vasconcelos. These official documents were contrasted with Indigenous narratives where available. I also conducted visual analysis of Diego Rivera's famous murals, reading them both as state propaganda and as potential sites of counter-narrative. The research revealed three crucial findings. First, the education system served as an assimilation machine: while expanding access to schools, it actively suppressed Indigenous languages and knowledge systems. Second, the celebrated mural movement presented an idealized Indigenous past that ironically justified policies erasing contemporary Indigenous identities. Third, many communities developed creative resistance strategies, from quietly maintaining traditional practices to establishing alternative schools. These findings demonstrate how cultural policies often serve state interests more than marginalized populations.

Like the muralists I studied, I now see my work as both interpretation and intervention, an attempt to surface hidden contradictions in Mexico's revolutionary project. The skills forged in that first-year seminar with Professor Cikota have become the bedrock of my practice, but the questions this essay leaves unanswered (those regional case studies, those silenced Indigenous voices) are already shaping my next steps. History is a discipline of perpetual curiosity, and this project has only deepened mine.

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