



# White But Not Equal: Mexican Americans, Jury Discrimination, and the Supreme Court

*Ignacio M. Garcia*

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Check out "A Class Apart" - the new PBS American Experience documentary that explores this historic case! In 1952 in Edna, Texas, Pete Hernández, a twenty-one-year-old cotton picker, got into a fight with several men and was dragged from a tavern, robbed, and beaten. Upon reaching his home he collected his .22-caliber rifle, walked two miles back to the tavern, and shot one of the assailants. With forty eyewitnesses and a confession, the case appeared to be open and shut. Yet *Hernández v. Texas* turned into one of the nation's most groundbreaking Supreme Court cases.

Ignacio García's *White But Not Equal* explores this historic but mostly forgotten case, which became the first to recognize discrimination against Mexican Americans. Led by three dedicated Mexican American lawyers, the case argued for recognition of Mexican Americans under the 14th Amendment as a "class apart." Despite a distinct history and culture, Mexican Americans were considered white by law during this period, yet in reality they were subjected to prejudice and discrimination. This was reflected in Hernández's trial, in which none of the selected jurors were Mexican American. The concept of Latino identity began to shift as the demand for inclusion in the political and judicial system began.

García places the *Hernández v. Texas* case within a historical perspective and examines the changing Anglo-Mexican relationship. More than just a legal discussion, this book looks at the whole case from start to finish and examines all the major participants, placing the story within the larger issue of the fight for Mexican American civil rights.

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