



# **LBJ and Mexican Americans: The Paradox of Power**

*Julie Leininger Pycior*

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As he worked to build his Great Society, Lyndon Johnson often harkened back to his teaching days in the segregated "Mexican" school at Cotulla, Texas. Recalling the poverty and prejudice that blighted his students' lives, Johnson declared, "It never occurred to me in my fondest dreams that I might have the chance to help the sons and daughters of those students and to help people like them all over this country. But now I do have that chance—and I'll let you in on a secret—I mean to use it."

This book explores the complex and sometimes contradictory relations between LBJ and Mexican Americans. Julie Pycior shows that Johnson's genuine desire to help Mexican Americans—and reap the political dividends—did not prevent him from allying himself with individuals and groups intent on thwarting Mexican Americans' organizing efforts. Not surprisingly, these actions elicited a wide range of response, from grateful loyalty to, in some cases, outright opposition. Mexican Americans' complicated relationship with LBJ influenced both their political development and his career with consequences that reverberated in society at large.

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