

The Soledad Children: The Fight to End Discriminatory IQ Tests

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The Soledad Children is a painful legal history from the not-so-distant past, when biased testing and cultural segregation were the rule, rather than the exception.

Marty Glick and Maurice Jourdane's *The Soledad Children* is the origin story of California Rural Legal Assistance, a groundbreaking legal services agency that took on elected officials, major corporations, and education dogma to change lives.

Focused on a class action lawsuit filed on behalf of nine Spanish-speaking students who had been relegated to an "Educable Mentally Retarded" class based on biased IQ tests, the book also shows how the CRLA's efforts and impact extended far beyond their classroom. The class action case challenged and changed the practice and helped to spur a similar suit on behalf of black students, also overrepresented in EMR classes because of biased standardized test results.

The Soledad children, whose families lived and labored in farm labor camps in the 1960s and 1970s, serve as supporting characters. Instead of focusing on them alone, the book begins with an overview of the American civil rights movement; it laid the groundwork for nonprofit social service agencies like California Rural Legal Assistance, established in 1966. Subsequent chapters cover the backgrounds of key staff members, the agency's other notable cases, and a political funding fight that threatened the agency's existence.

Much of the information is engaging and informative, and concise text covers complex legal issues in a clear way. More impactful are the book's anecdotal stories and legal testimonies that stem from the central case. They capture the voices of family members and misplaced students who recount spending their class time coloring, cutting pictures from magazines, and serving as janitorial assistants. But the focus shifts between chapters, sections, and time periods and impedes the book's flow, distracting from the compelling central story about the students.

Glick and Jourdane, who served as CRLA attorneys, are both the authors of the book and two of its key characters. However, *The Soledad Children* is written in third person rather than as a memoir. While their history with the agency gives them unlimited access to their own memories as well as to key court files covered, it also limits the story's scope at times. There are few insights into what may have driven the actions of the agency's opponents beyond basic political motivations and veiled racist views of CRLA clients.

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CHARLENE OLDHAM (August 15, 2019)

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