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Corazón de Dixie: Mexicanos in the U.S. South Since 1910 by
Julie M. Weise (review)

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Corazón de Dixie: Mexicanos in the U.S. South Since 1910. By Julie M. Weise (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2015. Pp. 358. Illustrations, maps, tables, appendices, notes, bibliography, index.)

Corazón de Dixie offers the first comprehensive examination of Mexicans in the U.S. South, challenging multiple misperceptions about Latino migration to, and life in, the region. Julie M. Weise argues that although journalists, social scientists, and politicians in the 1990s viewed Latinos as recent arrivals, Mexicans have made their home in the South for nearly a century. Through case studies of New Orleans in the 1910s, the sugar and cotton plantations of Mississippi and Arkansas at mid-century, and the rural and exurban spaces of Georgia and North Carolina since the 1970s, Weise shows that Mexican migration to the South was fueled not only by the demand for cheap, exploitable agricultural labor, but also by the desires of migrants themselves to escape economic uncertainty and discrimination in Texas and the Southwest. By uncovering this previously untold history, *Corazón de Dixie* provides compelling new insights into citizenship, labor, and racial formation from the age of Jim Crow to the present.

When *Mexicanos* began to migrate to the South, they encountered a racial system defined in black and white. *Mexicanos* did not uniformly fit into the existing hierarchy, and the reception they received from whites and African Americans, as well as their strategies for survival, varied according to factors including class, region, and citizenship status. *Mexicanos* engaged in “intensely local struggles” (13) to build community, demand their rights to fair wages and working conditions, and claim access to better schools and housing. The stories Weise tells reflect the rich diversity of Mexican experiences, where no one pattern fit all. Before the 1930s, migrants to New Orleans (largely middle- and upper-class professionals arriving by ship via the Gulf of Mexico) assimilated with relative ease into the urban port city, effectively highlighting Europeanized aspects of their identity in a city dependent upon international business and historic connections to Spain and Latin America. Because these early arrivals became “white,” the working class Mexicans and Tejanos who arrived later avoided the kind of segregation found across the Southwest. Mexicans in the rural South, confronted with exploitation and harsh working and living conditions, opted for a “Mexican strategy” (72) and turned to the consulate and their Mexican citizenship for assistance. Indeed, the Mexican government exerted considerable influence over local affairs, threatening to cut off *braceros* and blacklisting Arkansas growers when local businesses refused service to Mexicans. By the 1960s, the waning influence of the Mexican government and the rise of a brand of conservatism privileging individual achievement (embraced by growers, churches, Mexicans, and politicians alike) altered migrants’ options. By the end of the century,

tenuous acceptance gave way to open hostility in the suburbs and exurbs of places like Charlotte, North Carolina, where Weise convincingly argues that anti-immigrant sentiment emerged not from the extension of southern racism or even fears of job competition, but from suburban anxieties and rhetoric labeling Mexicans as illegitimate consumers of social services and local resources.

Weise makes use of an array of sources including census data, newspapers, Mexican consular reports, oral histories, and personal photo albums, offering a richly textured look at Mexican communities across time and place, and how, in the absence of the significant population concentrations and large civil rights organizations found in the Southwest, Mexicans set down southern roots and used the resources available to navigate a changing racial landscape. The inclusion of a companion website (<http://corazondedixie.org>) and methodology appendix make this book especially appealing for classroom use at the graduate and undergraduate levels.

Meticulously researched, thoughtfully argued, and engagingly written, *Corazón de Dixie* reveals the “complex combinations of acceptance and rejection, oppression and opportunity” (8) Mexicans encountered in the South. It offers fresh interpretations and promises to become a classic text in Mexican American, borderlands, labor, immigration, and southern history.

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Divided We Stand: The Battle over Women's Rights and Family Values That Polarized American Politics. By Marjorie J. Spruill. (New York: Bloomsbury, 2017. Pp. 436. Photographs, notes, index.)

Noted historian Marjorie J. Spruill has written a well-researched, detailed history of the modern-day fight over women's rights and its “essential role” (1) in bringing the United States to the fractious state we currently endure. Her immediate focus is the battle sparked by the 1977 National Women's Conference (NWC), the “crest of the ‘second wave’ of American feminism,” held in Houston to celebrate the United Nations' declaration of a “Decade for Women” (2). Delegates from each state were tasked with adopting a “National Plan of Action” to tell Congress and the president what, as President Gerald R. Ford asked, would make the country “a more perfect union” for women's equality (2).

Among the several goals that feminists (Republicans as well as Democrats), supported in the early 1970s, three emerged as lightning rods that attracted a “firestorm” (71) of conservative opposition: the Equal Rights Amendment (ERA) to the U.S. Constitution, reproductive freedom, and the fact that the NWC was conceptualized by the United Nations and