

BOOK REVIEW

Corazón de Dixie: Mexicanos in the U.S. South since 1910. David J. Weber Series in the New Borderlands History. By Julie M. Weise. (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2015. xiii + 344 pp. Illustrations, maps, tables, appendix, notes, bibliography, index. \$32.50, paper.)

While ethnic Mexicans appear as relative newcomers in current political and historical descriptions of the American South, Julie M. Weise's sweeping examination of Mexican people in the region forces readers to rethink their ideas of Southern history, labor history, and the history of race in America. Mexican people appear everywhere in the South but, more importantly in Weise's treatment, not as a monolithic, homogenous community. Rather a diverse set of experiences unified by their connections to the Mexican state, changing labor and racial structures and the need to build community encompass Mexican life in the South. *Corazón de Dixie* provides a model to understand both the continuity of social ideas across national boundaries and the situationally specific forces that shape communities over time and place.

Weise turns to oral histories, personal photo albums, and consular records to recover the lives of these families. The book provides a new kind of labor history that applies to transnational migrant workers. Photographs serve as a source to understand working class ideology and allow these workers to place themselves in a story of progress and upward

mobility. When faced with challenges in the workplace or at home, Mexicanos responded by connecting with available resources at the time, such as Mexican consulates, bracero program institutions, philanthropic churches and local officials, and each other.

Corazón de Dixie provides a wide-ranging rather than encyclopedic overview of Mexicano in the South. Divided into roughly three periods corresponding to the prevailing economic logics, Weise examines Mexican communities before the Depression, during the Bracero program, and into globalization and IRCA. Within each period, she examines the experiences of a community within an individual state that is emblematic of an element of the period. Weise begins in New Orleans, site of the longest and most recognized Mexican presence. Just after the turn of the 20th century, Mexicanos occupied the white racial category with an emphasis on their nationality as Mexicans. This stands in contrast to the treatment of Mexican sharecroppers in Mississippi during the same period who faced segregation along with Black families. These families turned to the Mexican consulate to advocate for equal treatment.

Assistance from the Mexican state before the Depression shifted to collaboration between federal officials engaged in the Bracero program in Arkansas into the 1960s. Weise finds a pattern developing in agricultural labor in Arkansas where the consulate sought protections while local officials set up a social support system. This sort of local support was

extended by conservative Christian groups in Georgia in subsequent decades, a dynamic absent in North Carolina up to the present. Mexican workers in all periods experienced these social situations through the lens created by the political and economic situation in Mexico.

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