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Latinx History outside the American Southwest and Borderlands

Jennifer Macias

Corazón de Dixie: Mexicanos in the U.S. South since 1910. By Julie M. Weise. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2015. xiii + 344 pages. \$32.50 (paper).

Latina Lives in Milwaukee. By Theresa Delgadillo. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2015. xx + 248 pages. \$28.00 (paper).

Of Forest and Fields: Mexican Labor in the Pacific Northwest. By Mario Jimenez Sifuentez. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2016. x + 193 pages. \$27.95 (paper).

Scratching Out a Living: Latinos, Race, and Work in the Deep South. By Angela Stuesse. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2016. xii + 336 pages. \$29.95 (paper).

Steel Barrio: The Great Mexican Migration to South Chicago, 1915–1940. By Michael Innis-Jiménez. New York: New York University Press, 2013. xiii + 235 pages. \$27.00 (paper).

Throughout the American Southwest and the borderlands area, there are visual reminders of Latinx presence. The murals in San Diego's Chicanx Park, for example, or the César E. Chávez National Monument in Keene, California, and even the Alamo in San Antonio, Texas, remind passersby of Latinxs' existence in the area, however contested that presence may be. Yet murals such as Ruby Chacón's *Cihuacoatl and Gold Rule* in downtown Salt Lake City are often perceived as out of place. Her depictions of Latinx musicians, farm peddlers, and even César Chávez call for a reckoning with the agency and strength of Latinxs and the importance of their labor, political, social, and cultural contributions to Utah. The unintelligibility of the murals to many of those who see them signals the lack of recognition of the long-standing presence of Latinas/os in the United States outside the Southwest, something scholarship has not

done enough to remedy. This essay engages with a group of recently published books that speak powerfully into that silence and invisibility of Latinxs beyond the borderlands, and consider what life was like for Latinxs during the twentieth- and twenty-first centuries in the South, the Pacific Northwest, and the Northeast. These books push both the geographic and scholarly boundaries of Latinx history.

In *Corazón de Dixie: Mexicans in the U.S. South since 1910*, Julie Weise debunks the notion that Latinxs were not in the South before the end of the twentieth century. Weise argues that Mexicanos determined their own place within the racial and social hierarchies already present in the early 1900s South to shape the image of Mexicans in a way that secured a better treatment than the ones Latinxs received in the West. As Southern employers' reliance on Latinxs as a steady labor force increased, Mexican immigrants and Mexican Americans continued to negotiate their place in regional and national political conversations associated with labor, citizenship, class, and race. Taking up some of the same terrain as the final chapter in Weise's book, which is situated in greater Charlotte, North Carolina, since 1990, the anthropologist Angela Stuesse's monograph *Scratching Out a Living: Latinos, Race, and Work in the Deep South* examines the creation of the "Nuevo New South" in central Mississippi. Stuesse's work focuses on a geographic area characterized by Mississippi's poultry industry, which grew exponentially after the influx of a diverse group of Latinxs after the 1990s, and they replaced African Americans as the majority labor force. Theresa Delgadillo also offers a broad historical narrative of Latinx experiences in *Latina Lives in Milwaukee*, a collection of oral histories that highlight multiethnic Latinx life in the Midwest. The interviews span diverse classes and occupations, and provide firsthand recollections from women whose families arrived in Milwaukee starting in the 1920s, arguing that while Latinas often faced serious obstacles, they significantly contributed to Latinx civil rights and educational access. Michael Innis-Jiménez's *Steel Barrio: The Great Mexican Migration to South Chicago, 1915–1940* considers the growth of urban areas and issues surrounding racial segregation in these spaces. He argues that South Chicago Mexicans created multiracial organizations in order to survive and establish their presence in the city. With a focus on urban Mexicans, Innis-Jiménez proposes that Mexicans resisted assimilation and created a unique space in South Chicago that allowed them to continue cultural practices and the use of Spanish. Mario Jimenez Sifuentez's *Of Forests and Fields: Mexican Labor in the Pacific Northwest* argues that the economy of the Pacific Northwest after World War II flourished because of Mexican and

Mexican American labor. He divides his study according to a chronology of three waves of Mexican immigrants to Oregon: individual braceros who arrived during and after World War II, Tejano migrants who came from the 1950s to the 1970s, and Mexican nationals migrating after the 1970s. Sifuentez engages deeply with labor and environmental history to highlight the multitude of obstacles that Latinxs in the Pacific Northwest encountered.

Steel Barrio

Innis-Jiménez's *Steel Barrio* tracks the first wave of Mexican immigrants into the area. *Steel Barrio* begins by looking at why Mexicans traveled to Chicago in the first place, addressing what set Mexican immigrants apart, specifically the "proximity of Mexico to the United States, which allowed for a circular migration that culturally refreshed the community," as well as the belief that most Mexicans would eventually "return to Mexico financially secure" to provide for their families (13). At a time when steel mills in Chicago needed workers, Mexican laborers proved to be a welcome asset to industrial recruiters. The onset of the Great Depression pushed the Mexican community to unite physically and culturally to survive Depression-era unemployment. Innis-Jiménez argues that these forms of resistance helped unite community members who were able to improve their daily lives without assimilating. Even in the face of nationwide events such as the Great Depression, with the very real fear of unemployment and repatriation, Mexicans came together through sports-centered organizations such as baseball; these groups not only provided much-needed activities for both adults and youths but, because of the teams' and athletes' respected status within the community, productively expanded to provide other services for the community during the Depression. South Chicago became a battleground where Mexicans and Mexican Americans navigated their roles within industries, attempted to alter how they were viewed by the government, and, ultimately, with each new wave of immigrants, established their foothold in the city.

Corazón de Dixie

While most scholars of the South focus on the black–white binary racial system, Weise's *Corazón de Dixie* challenges this traditional narrative by incorporating the lives of Mexicans and Mexican Americans into the twentieth-century history of the South. Starting with the first wave of migrants in the 1910s, Weise tracks their transnational movement between Latin America and the South, and the

ways Mexican workers negotiated and strategized in response to race relations in the region and larger national events. As Weise argues, these new stories complicate the larger narratives of race, class, and citizenship that shaped the lives of people living in the South. Equally important are the reactions from both whites and African Americans, as she considers how different classes responded to the new laborers and the ways they attempted to use them for their own personal gain. While Weise engages with traditional sources, the use of oral history interviews and migrants' photo albums allows Weise to provide a visual depiction of migrant lives. As a result of the Mexican Revolution, Mexicans were pushed into the city of New Orleans, a major destination for Mexicans who arrived by ship. As Weise argues, Mexicans solidified their identity as "civilized" by insisting that Mexico was a "Europeanized land whose citizens could integrate unproblematically into white New Orleans" (9). Weise suggests that Mexicans assimilated with relative ease into whiteness by "crafting a specific image of Mexican culture" that was nonthreatening to locals and paralleled the experiences of European immigrants. The second chapter considers the gains Mexicans made as a result of assimilation, including the ability to fight attempts to prevent Mexican children from attending white schools, resulting in long-term racial gains for Mexicans who were considered "white" by the 1950s. The third chapter looks at the thousands of Tejanos who arrived in Arkansas as braceros, a group that openly protested and successfully appealed to the Mexican consulate for political support in combating wage discrimination and atrocious living conditions. As a result, conditions improved not just for Mexicans but also for African Americans as the braceros forced white planters to pay a minimum wage, which extended to all agricultural workers (117). The final two chapters address how Mexicans shifted their appeals away from the consulate to "conservative white patrons at work and church," in an attempt to receive social acceptance in white communities, which turned out to not be entirely successful, as it just replaced one form of paternalism with another. As Mexicans continued to migrate in larger numbers, new tensions arose from white middle-class Americans who resented Mexicans as "consumers of public services such as schools, roads and parks" (12). While Weise illustrates the myriad of racial and social hierarchies that Mexicans and Mexican Americans experienced throughout the South depending on their occupation and regional location, she concludes, counterintuitively, that "southern communities nearly always emerged as more receptive to Mexicans than western ones" (13).

Of Forests and Fields

For many laborers who ventured to the Pacific Northwest, including Sifuentez's own parents, the region represented an area where they could find work. Sifuentez argues that ethnic Mexican labor, in the form of braceros, Tejanos, and activists, reshaped the Northwest into one of the most productive regions after World War II. Moving chronologically, Sifuentez begins his book at a much earlier time frame than previous scholars, offering an opportunity to analyze and address the unique nature of the Bracero Program in the Northwest. Using oral histories, Sifuentez argues in his first chapter that because of the geographic location of the Pacific Northwest, alluding to how difficult it was to get laborers up north and the labor shortages that ensued. As a result, braceros took on a more "militant stance towards their employers and went on strike more often," which meant better wages, and men who "saw themselves as agents of their own labor and performed with dignity" (3). Ethnic Mexicans also traveled to the area as undocumented laborers during this time period. In the years after the end of the Bracero Program, the INS consistently raided the area during harvest season each year, deporting a relatively small proportion in comparison with the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) raids in the Southwest. The second chapter turns its attention to the Tejanos—ethnic Mexicans from Texas—who migrated to the Northwest after the 1950s and resisted assimilation by creating a cultural community. Sifuentez argues that Tejanos' lack of fear of being deported as a result of their documented status as American citizens gave them a sense of security in their communities, empowering them to fight against racial and social injustices in the area. They were also emboldened by their proficiency with English, the opportunity to work in year-round industries such as food-processing plants, and the ability to secure housing, which was provided by Nisei farm owners. Entire families were recruited into the region, as they were perceived to be more trustworthy and productive than single men. Women played a central role in family settlement, not only in caring and providing for the family, but also through being able to secure employment outside the home. These opportunities were largely made possible thanks to the Nisei, who Sifuentez posits "offered year-round employment, provided housing, and even offered loans" (54). The aid of Japanese Americans was central to the success of Latinxs in the area, a unique aspect of the kind of post-World War II interactions of different ethnic groups that others, like Natalia Molina, have also attended to. Later on, organized resistance took shape in the 1970s with the Willamette Valley Immigration

Project (WVIP), an organization developed by Latinx laborers to combat INS raids and protect immigrant rights. Sifuentez argues that the battles fought by the WVIP paved the way for other immigrants' rights organizations and ultimately limited the INS's capacity to deport people. Sifuentez explores the WVIP's decision to organize reforestation workers, as well as its involvement into the Pineros y Campesinos Unidos Noroeste (PCUN) by the 1980s, which led to the successful creation of a union that helped develop farmworker consciousness during the Reagan era and empowered agricultural laborers.

Latina Lives in Milwaukee

In *Latina Lives in Milwaukee* Delgadillo adds to a growing literature on Latin American–descended populations in the US Midwest, using oral histories to focus specifically on Latinas and their histories and influences on the city of Milwaukee. Collected under the “Latina Oral Histories of Milwaukee Project,” the oral histories reflect the heart of the project. Each Latina and her family are the subject of the nine chapters, spanning the twentieth century, starting with women whose families arrived in Milwaukee in the 1920s and concluding with Carmen Murguía, a Latina born in 1966 and raised in Milwaukee. These women come from different social classes and do diverse kinds of work, and the narratives reveal important differences in Latinx lives over time. The diversity of these stories adds to a growing subfield of Latinx history, including not only stories of Mexican American women but also the experiences of Latinas from places like Puerto Rico and El Salvador. This multinational view of Latina life is important, for it shows how much nationality mattered to the kinds of lives and opportunities that were available.

Delgadillo argues that popular concepts of migration and settlement, which are normally driven by stories that revolve around men, can be better understood by looking at the stories of “mothers’ and foremothers’ roles in migration” (24). In the stories of Antonia Morales, María Monreal Cameron, and Ramona Arsiniega, the oral histories reveal that women played important roles in deciding when to migrate to Milwaukee. They negotiate survival when male breadwinners were unable to continue supporting their family, such as when Morales’s father died in Milwaukee, prompting her and her older siblings to work so they could help provide for their family. Furthermore, these stories reveal the complex social and migration patterns that formed across the United States, where Latinas and their families traveled across various other cities before finding a support network of migrant women in Milwaukee that allowed them

to build communal areas of support in the city (25). Since Latinxs felt isolated in Milwaukee—far from the cities densely populated with Latinxs—they built multinational Latinx communities, in which collaborations between Latinxs from different places were not uncommon. Delgado effectively illustrates both how women’s roles were actually far from what many believed them to be and the importance of the Midwest in the production of a (pan)-Latinx identity.

Scratching Out a Living

In *Scratching Out a Living*, Stuesse explores the story of chicken-processing plants in Mississippi and the communities that formed around them. Those communities included African Americans, poor whites, and the Latinx migrants who were recruited in the 1990s as laborers. Her study sheds light on the South, a region too often understood in terms of black and white, yet one in which the Latinxs are growing at one of the fastest rates of any part of the country. As in Milwaukee, Mississippi’s Latinx population is multinational, with laborers from both Central and South America. Stuesse’s activist research included months of observations in the poultry centers, culminating in oral histories with the workers, poultry plant executives, community leaders, and others. The book is divided across ten chapters, arguing that rural Mississippi was transformed by the inclusion of Latinxs, which in turn shifted capital and labor dynamics, and has had long-lasting implications in both southern communities and the new immigrant groups going into the area.

The second and third chapters address the history of the poultry industry, and its reliance on unequal political and economic relationships between employers and workers as a way to ensure its success. In chapter 4 Stuesse begins truly engaging with Latinxs’ stories, as they arrived in larger numbers to the area after the 1970s, just as plants began to shift away from African American workers who were bargaining for higher pay. The initial recruitment in the 1970s forever changed the Mississippi landscape, and while this initially reinforced the black–white binary, as more Latinxs migrated to the area, they carved out a third space, a “nebulous and mutable position between black and white” (118). She argues that while most all the workers in labor-intensive industries are dehumanized, their experiences vary. Her interviews reveal worker mistreatment by abusive supervisors, yet in comparison with African American workers, Latinxs were less likely to complain or report the abuse for fear of retaliation or termination. While the third space for Latinxs outside the chicken plants was between blackness and whiteness, inside the chicken

plants Latinxs were beneath African American workers, whose citizenship and mastery of the English language offered them a higher status than immigrant workers. As a result, Latinxs were forced to work less desirable shifts and more dangerous jobs.

Collectively, these rich texts allow readers to intellectually re-create this previously submerged history and to begin mapping a new, more inclusive field in Latinx history. Spanning the twentieth and early twenty-first centuries, these books reexamine the importance of location in shaping historical experiences. Reading across these texts allows us to ask new questions: How did Latinxs cultivate communities in regions or cities with little to no visible Latinx influence? In what ways did Latinx migrant workers navigate the different regional contexts that they found themselves in, and what impact did this transnational labor have on the development of the United States? How did Latinxs navigate the black–white binary that politically, socially, and culturally divided areas like the South yet concurrently navigate areas such as the Pacific Northwest, where those binaries were seemingly less important? Did Latinxs’ presence force white social hierarchies to shift and adapt, and what lasting impacts did that have on race relations in various regions and cities throughout the United States?

Turning first to the question of race, these monographs suggest new ways to read the racialization of US Latinxs. For example, in her first chapter, “Mexicans as Europeans: Mexican Nationalism and Assimilation in New Orleans, 1910–1939,” Weise uses New Orleans as an example of how middle-class Mexican immigrants were able to “shape the image of ‘Mexicans,’ in ways that secured their place among European-style white immigrants” (14). The first waves of immigrants to the city began via the Gulf Coast, where steamships brought migrants into the city, where their racial status was still relatively fluid. Escaping the violence of the Mexican Revolution, many newly arrived Mexican immigrants entered into middle-class professions, an identity Weise attributes to their access to education and monetary funds. Additionally, since New Orleans did not have a *barrio*, such as those that Innis-Jiménez discusses in Chicago, Mexicans found housing in traditionally white areas of New Orleans, where many Mexican men found white women to court and marry. In the South, New Orleans became increasingly significant for Mexicanos, a city that was a vital central location to Mexicans who worked on plantations throughout the South. Weise argues that Mexicans in New Orleans lived as white people, a phenomenon scholars of the Southwest have not actively analyzed. Mexicans living in other areas where they faced barriers in achieving political, social, or racial mobility, such as the Mississippi Delta, looked to New Orleans when

they need assistance. For example, when Mexican schoolchildren were denied access by white Southerners to white schools starting in the 1930s, Mexicanos in the Mississippi Delta, not having Mexican organizations to rely on, petitioned the Mexican consulate directly to step in on their behalf. Most of the Delta's Mexican American children were able to attend white schools, which in turn led to increased rates of interracial marriage after the 1930s. The analytic consideration for how Mexican nationals and Mexican Americans negotiated with the Mexican consulate illustrates an important transnational aspect previously understudied by Latinx scholars.

The story Innis-Jiménez tells about Mexican racialization in Chicago, however, is markedly different. Mexicans entered as laborers in new industries, agriculture, and the railroads, and were often seen by whites as the least intrusive of the groups available for hire. As the benefits of whiteness opened up to European immigrants by the 1920s, Mexicans in Chicago were understood, increasingly, as not-white in ways akin to how southern and eastern European immigrants had been seen in previous decades. Mexican workers encountered dangerous working conditions and racism in the workplace, and stereotypes that they were lazy or disloyal, amplifying the tension between workers and white owners.

Work was a site of conflict, but it also settled communities, rooting them in locations far from the Southwest. According to Innis-Jiménez, the availability of year-round industrial jobs provided workers with a steady income, so that they could settle down permanently in Chicago. From there, Mexican neighborhoods known as *barrios* became fixtures in the geography of Chicago. Delgadillo reveals a similar trajectory for Mexicans in Milwaukee. There, Mexicans who needed to find employment were also forced into dangerous jobs, as suggested by her interview with Margarita Sandoval Skare. Skare's father worked for the Greenbaum Tannery, where he encountered treacherous conditions in which he "inhaled noxious fumes and worked with chemicals" (42).

The idea of the Catholic Church as a vehicle for assimilation is an important attribute of these smaller cities: whereas Mexicans in larger cities such as Los Angeles would have been forced into large public schools that were possibly segregated, Mexicans in smaller cities would have had better chances at succeeding in Catholic schools where they could bond with other students over religion as opposed to racial and/or cultural differences. Many parents realized that Catholic schooling might not be enough and ensured that other forms of assimilation occurred in the household to help their children. For example, Delgadillo's interview with Antonia Morales reveals her mother's insistence

on the children learning English and not speaking in Spanish. Morales also discusses how attending a Catholic school, even when she was one of three Mexicans, did not make her feel alienated or like a minority. Religion as a uniting factor allowed her to succeed in ways she might not have at a public school during the same time.

Both Innis-Jiménez and Weise also offer new insight into the lives of Latinxs during the Great Depression, arguing that Latinxs experienced this period differently depending on where they were. The mass deportations witnessed in cities such as Los Angeles were not repeated everywhere; such actions would have destroyed smaller local economies that would have lost a vital aspect of their labor force. In South Chicago, Innis-Jiménez argues in chapter 7, “The Great Depression,” the Mexican community was deeply shaped by the Depression, creating an altered community, where previous cultural norms against going on relief were eased, and multiple family members were now forced to gain employment, including women. Although involuntary repatriation campaigns in South Chicago were considerably smaller in scale than those in other cities, like Los Angeles, the experiences of those repatriated and their departure from the city affected the development of Mexican barrios during the era. While many Mexicans had successfully resisted assimilation in the 1920s, the Great Depression required that they approach and enroll with agencies that had previously tried to assimilate them. Those who remained aided in the survival and continued development of Mexican communities, and as Innis-Jiménez argues, “the sense of community among Mexicans in South Chicago was stronger as they organized in order to survive harassment and the depression itself” (157). Weise also points out that the Depression and deportation years were less impoverishing for Mexicans in New Orleans than in large Southwestern cities. Instead, a new wave of unemployed Mexicans appeared, including the “army of laborers newly unemployed in Chicago,” that Innis-Jiménez mentions. In regard to deportation, Weise maintains that Mexicans faced the same likelihood of deportation as other immigrants during the Depression years. She attributes this to the fact that it would have been virtually impossible to carry out a deportation campaign, as Mexicans worked across various spaces and industries throughout the city. The majority of Mexican workers who left via repatriation did so voluntarily.

Weise, Sifuentez, and Delgado also offer new perspectives on the Bracero Program and the lives of Latinxs during the 1940s. In chapter 3 of *Corazón de Dixie*, “Citizens of Somewhere: Braceros, Tejanos, Dixiecrats, and Mexican Bureaucrats in the Arkansas Delta, 1939–1964,” Weise tracks the efforts

of Arkansas farmers to recruit braceros in the late 1940s. Like other areas throughout the United States, braceros in Arkansas had little to no access to transportation, were denied their guaranteed paid and medical attention, and were forced to live in deteriorating buildings by farm overseers. Since bracero minimum wages were greater than the local prevailing wage, Weise describes how their status as braceros was significant in that they were the first group of workers with economic rights. Braceros unintentionally obligated white planters to pay a minimum wage in agriculture, which in turn extended to black and white workers. The existences of a black–brown labor force meant that farmers in the South hoped that they could replace African American workers altogether with a cheaper, Mexican-only labor force. In the end, while the Bracero Program brought long-term Mexican settlement to many other areas of the United States, including the Pacific Northwest as Sifuentez discusses, few braceros stayed in Arkansas. In the years after the end of the program, Weise describes how local southern authorities attempted to better the relationship between whites and Mexicanos, in an attempt to attract more workers to the area. They were ultimately successful, and future white–Mexican labor relations were negotiated between Mexican workers and employers based on the “Mexicanization” of the delta that occurred during the decades of the Bracero Program.

In his first chapter, “Many Miles from Home: The Bracero Program in the Pacific Southwest,” Sifuentez explains the ways braceros, who were intended to be short-term laborers, “permanently changed the face of the Pacific Northwest” (11). Unlike the Southwest, where growers had a reserve of Mexican laborers, the Northwest experienced serious labor shortages, especially in the agricultural sector. The Bracero Program proved challenging to execute however, in light of the considerable distance between the border and the Northwest. Nonetheless, Sifuentez illustrates that braceros actively contributed to the area’s economy, and in the end were different from braceros in other regions “because of their militancy on the job, the range of occupations in which they engaged, the wages they demanded, and the migration patterns they established” (11). Using oral histories, Sifuentez breaks down the various jobs available for braceros in the region, including agricultural and railroad work. The influx of single Mexican males prompted braceros to begin courting Anglo women, and with the absence of rivals, white women encouraged the men’s confidence and “validated their masculinity” by choosing to date and marry them (22). Braceros in the Pacific Northwest filed grievances related to housing, food, and wages, to improve their daily lives. Braceros stood up to both their employers and law enforcement

officials by using work stoppages and strikes in the fields, creating a situation where growers often gave in to the worker's demands. Sifuentes argues that in the end the program created opportunities for the men to live better lives. It also triggered even more Mexicans and Mexican Americans to migrate to the Northwest; many who had traveled as *braceros* returned with their families as undocumented. Tejanos also found employment in the food-processing industry, allowing them to stay year-round.

A powerful history of Latinxs after the 1990s emerges across these narratives as well. Sifuentes, Stuesse, and Delgadillo collectively demonstrate how the recent influx in Latinx immigration into these previously unstudied areas is important for better understanding the place of Latinxs moving into the twenty-first century, because it provides an indication of what the future of race relations might hold. Sifuentes begins by addressing the importance of undocumented immigrants and unions with his discussion of the *Pineros y Campesinos Unidos Noroeste* (United Tree Planters and Farm Workers of the Northwest), or the PCUN union. The Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986 gave the PCUN a membership base, since it worked with Mexican migrants to apply for legalization. The PCUN not only helped workers but negotiated collective bargaining agreements with farms in the area. As Stuesse explains, the 1990s in rural Mississippi were characterized by a boom in Mexican immigration, largely a result of the transnational networks that had developed between parts of Mexico and the South throughout the 1960s and 1970s. The new influx of a male Mexican migrant workforce that arrived entered into manufacturing and chicken-processing plants. Stuesse argues that the arrival of the immigrants fortified a structure where whiteness was equated with privilege, while blackness was seen as the bottom. For Latinxs, this meant many entered Mississippi society in a space between ideas of whiteness and blackness. However, inside industries such as the chicken plants, Latinxs' uncertain citizenship status and lack of fluency with English made it difficult to maintain that space between, and they were instead relegated to the bottom of a social hierarchy. Stuesse posits that one problem facing Latinxs in rural Mississippi is their difficulty in uniting with black workers to defend their rights, which has allowed the racial binary to continue to exist within industries.

For Latinas in Milwaukee, Delgadillo's oral histories reveal that one of the greatest obstacles facing women is access to education for themselves and their children. For example, Daisy Cubas worked for ten years with Milwaukee Public Schools and in eighteen schools, trying to get more parents involved in education. In another of her oral histories, Olga Valcourt Schwartz voiced

her concern over the public schools losing students and the low pay that teachers were receiving. She also laments the small number of women in central leadership in those schools, particularly women of color. These examples are significant in illustrating the obstacles that Latinas still continue to face and fight against even today.

Collectively, these books advocate for new methodological directions in charting the history of Latinos. With only a few decades under its belt, the field of Latinx history has flourished, shifting outside the Southwest and borderlands area, embracing new theories of decoloniality, incorporating class and gender analysis, and slowly shifting toward the integration of queer studies. Each book uses oral histories, in addition to photographs and other archival evidence, to recount the lived experiences of everyday Latinxs. They reveal that there is no single trajectory or account of Latinx history in the United States, and perhaps most important, that regional, state, and local knowledge and experiences are much more expansive and complex, often giving voice to underrepresented populations such as women and children who have been overlooked in larger narratives. As scholars continue to write about Latinxs, particularly in the twentieth and twenty-first century, oral histories must be integrated in order to balance the bureaucratic perspective of Latinx history, as well as creating new archives for future scholars to use. Each scholar does a commendable job of critically analyzing and integrating in those stories, illustrating that using oral histories is more than an analytic tool; it allows a glimpse of the experiences and lives of Latinxs who have a history that deserves to be written.

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