

Latin American Migrations to the U. S. Heartland: Changing Social Landscapes in Middle America

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scored near national norms on the Iowa Tests of Basic Skills (in grade 8, Amish children scored significantly higher than the norm).

In general, this is an essential work for anyone interested in the Amish, whether that interest is originally sparked by neighbors, news accounts, public portrayals, or “Amish” products found in stores in different parts of North America. It is an essential work on the Amish for both those who begin with little knowledge and those who would like to update their understanding of this unique plain Christian community.

Latin American Migrations to the U.S. Heartland: Changing Social Landscapes in Middle America, edited by Linda Allegro and Andrew Grant Wood. *The Working Class in American History*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2013. xiii, 344 pp. Graphs, notes, references, tables, index. \$65.00 hardcover.

Reviewer Felipe Hinojosa is assistant professor of history at Texas A & M University. He is the author of the forthcoming *Latino Mennonites: Civil Rights, Faith, and Evangelical Culture*.

The Midwest has long been a place characterized by traditional American values of individualism, hard work, and conservative politics. As some say, it is the place where the “real Americans” live. And yet, it is also a region that carries eclectic political orientations, where rural and urban markers matter, and where changing demographics are redefining the very heart of American identity. Those changing demographics and the controversies they have fueled are at the center of an excellent collection of essays edited by Linda Allegro and Andrew Wood. Much of what the public knows about Latin American immigration to the Midwest is often tainted by xenophobic sentiments that ignore the underlying complexities and mixed perspectives that white, black, and native midwesterners hold about immigration.

Intent on presenting a different picture of immigration, Allegro and Wood organized a volume that provides a more humane depiction of Latin American immigrants by carefully documenting the challenges and possibilities they present in the region. The editors argue that the Midwest, with its open fields and small-town feel, creates unique possibilities for Latin American immigrants, many of whom come from their own heartlands in Mexico or Guatemala. Notions of the heartland in the United States, as the editors note, help to forge strong connections between midwesterners in Iowa and immigrants whose origins are often quite similar. Both, for example, have been hit hard by structural economic policies such as NAFTA and GATT,

which have displaced rural populations across Latin America and the American Midwest. That is an extremely important point that could have been fleshed out a bit more in the chapters. Regardless, each of the authors in the volume does an admirable job of weaving together how structural forces interact and shape the everyday lives of immigrants in the region.

The places they work and worship, how they build movements of solidarity, and how they live in constant fear of deportation mark only some of the important themes that the authors address. They also do an excellent job of positioning the Midwest as a dynamic region where complex and often contradictory politics coexist. Instead of accusing the Midwest of being a haven for conservative politics, essays like the one written by Jane Juffer note how religious activists have spawned a “diasporic faith” that is ecumenical and progressive on its stance regarding immigrant rights (251). Another essay builds on the “politics of possibility” rather than the “politics of identity” (189–90) in its treatment of conflicting responses to the immigrant raids that captured the nation’s attention in 2006. Whatever anti-immigrant discourses exist in the region, the authors highlight how the region has been a place for immigrants to build lives and create class-based solidarity. The authors also challenge the notion that Latin American migration to the Midwest is a new development. Several essays provide historical context for why Mexican immigrants first moved to the Midwest during the early part of the twentieth century and the lives they have built since then.

The few critiques I have focus on historiographical and theoretical issues. The first has to do with a lack of theoretical engagement among some of the authors. It is important to think critically about the Midwest as “heartland” and further develop the notion of a “Mexican heartland.” Part of the problem is rooted in the sources. Most of the authors rely on U.S. sources in their research and rarely engage the places and regions many of the immigrants call home. Another point centers on the notion of the regional limits of the Midwest. Early in the book, the editors lay out a wonderful map of the “heartland 6,” which includes Nebraska, Kansas, Oklahoma, Iowa, Missouri, and Arkansas. The map gives the impression that the book will focus on those six states as the “heartland.” But the book, curiously enough, includes chapters on North Carolina, Pennsylvania, and Idaho. Certainly those states share much in common with the “heartland 6” in terms of demographic changes and labor markets, but are these states in the “heartland”? If so, it would have been helpful to have the editors think critically about the Midwest as de-territorialized space or perhaps as a

place defined strictly by geographical realities—the “no coast” region as one author calls it (201). In a region that often defies regional specificity, the editors missed an opportunity to redefine the conversation about what it means to live and work in the “heartland.” In terms of historiography and disciplinary crossings, the editors fail to engage how Chicana/o historians have addressed the Midwest. Many of the authors do in fact cite Chicana/o historians, but the volume would have benefited from seizing the opportunity to critically examine how Chicana/o studies intersect and help inform Latin American studies and vice versa.

Aside from these small critiques, this is an excellent collection that will be an extremely beneficial resource for scholars and students who are working toward a future when immigrants are welcomed and seen as a valuable resource for community building and transformation.

Correction

In the book review section of the Fall 2013 issue of the *Annals of Iowa*, the reviewer of Linda Barnickel’s *Milliken’s Bend: A Civil War Battle in History and Memory* stated, “The author criticizes Union Commander Ben McCulloch’s claim that the Iowans did not exhibit any courage” (393). There was no Union commander at Milliken’s Bend by that name. Instead, the reviewer was referring to Confederate General Henry E. McCulloch, who did indeed cast aspersions on the Iowans’ behavior in combat.