

Latino Heartland: Of Borders and Belonging in the Midwest

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Shift, 'English Only,' and Multilingualism in the United States" by Joshua A. Fishman. All demonstrate that whiteness, privilege, and citizenship have been bound to one another, while non-whiteness has meant subordinate status. They all agree that gaining "an occupational and economic foothold" (340) is an absolute prerequisite for any possibility of social mobility. Panethnic or transnational identities have never fully overcome ethno-racial ones. Viewing migration in terms of both emigration and immigration continues to "open up new avenues of scholarship" (399).

The film, correspondence, and museums category features "Immigration, Race, and Ethnicity in American Film" by Stephen Alan Carr; "Written Forms of Communication from Immigrant Letters to Instant Messaging" by Suzanne M. Sinke; and "Melting Pots, Salad Bowls, Ethnic Museums, and American Identity" by Stephen Conn. Whereas most film depictions of ethnic groups, with notable exceptions, still remain "messy and full of contradictions" (453), written forms of communication and ethnic museums can bestow "a sense of place and voice and dignity" (484).

In a final, critically important article, "New Approaches in Teaching Immigration and Ethnic History," John J. Bukowczyk advises that "the advent of new technologies, innovative methods of instruction, and greater availability of source materials online has changed teaching in the field, but the quality of teaching ultimately depends on what questions the researcher and teacher ask and the intellectual framework within which these questions are located" (489). Scholarship and teaching "are—or should be—co-constitutive and mutually reinforcing practices" (489).

Latino Heartland: Of Borders and Belonging in the Midwest, by Sujey Vega. New York: New York University Press, 2015. xxvi, 261 pp. Illustrations, notes, bibliography, index. \$30.00 paperback.

Reviewer Felipe Hinojosa is associate professor of history at Texas A&M University. He is the author of *Latino Mennonites: Civil Rights, Faith, and Evangelical Culture* (2014).

In *Latino Heartland*, Sujey Vega introduces us to the stories, struggles, and resiliency of the Latino immigrant community in Lafayette, Indiana (located about 100 miles southeast of Chicago). With analytical precision and a storyteller's heart, Vega explores the politics of race, community formation, and the politics of belonging against the backdrop of a growing anti-immigrant sentiment in this midwestern town. Anti-immigrant sentiment has a long history in this country, but in the

years since the attack on 9/11 the hatred has escalated. The fear was compounded in 2006 when U.S. Representative Jim Sensenbrenner of Wisconsin introduced House Resolution 4437, which linked border and immigration control with antiterrorism policy. Such political rhetoric, Vega correctly argues, “moved the [immigration] debate away from the more familiar geographical setting of the southwest.” The impact of these debates “thickens the borderlands” and pushes us—especially scholars of Latina/o Studies thoroughly focused on the Southwest or Northeast—to the Midwest and to its importance as a borderland (7).

Latino Heartland is brilliant because it provides a ground-level analysis of the ways racist immigration policy affects the lives of Latino immigrants in a region where many people see them as a threat. In a recent article in the *New Yorker* magazine, journalist and coanchor on Univision news Jorge Ramos told the story of a Latina in Iowa who shared with him the fear that immigrants are living with in that state. “People were afraid to leave their houses,” the woman told him, and “when they went to Wal-Mart, they only felt comfortable going at night.” (William Finnegan, “The Man Who Wouldn’t Sit Down: How Univision’s Jorge Ramos Earns His Viewer’s Trust,” *New Yorker*, October 5, 2015.) With a focus on Indiana, *Latino Heartland* takes us beyond the Southwest and Northeast (where a majority of Latinos live) and introduces readers to the new challenges, the new social movements, and the “everyday encounters” of Latino immigrants in the Midwest.

For this study, Vega did meticulous research, scouring local archives to get a sense of the town’s history and conducting 79 oral history interviews. The result is a deep analysis of local politics and anti-Latino racism and the story of a town on the crossroads of social and political change. In many ways, Lafayette is like many other towns in the Midwest experiencing rapid demographic change—places like Moline, Illinois, or Davenport, Iowa, both with historic Latino populations who in recent years have seen those populations rise. In each chapter, Vega carefully teases out the interplay of race, class, gender, and immigration politics that in many ways challenges the myth of a tranquil and neutral Indiana. But without question new spaces often create new problems, as when police officers in Lafayette “incorrectly conflated Virgin de Guadalupe iconography with gang affiliations” (174). Yet the stories in *Latino Heartland* also show us how “these mid-western spaces became part of their [Latinos’] sense of home” (71). This was the place where Latinos “joined their transnational ties with their localized Hoosier experiences” (177).

There are limits to community, but Vega reminds us—no, she shows us—that community matters because it creates hopeful possi-

bilities in the face of despair. The focus on Lafayette clues us in to the mechanics of a global phenomenon, and right now there is no greater laboratory than the Midwest. This is the region where new waves of Latinos are transforming communities and where, ironically, Latinos are giving new life to a region that is tagged by many as “the real America.” I loved this book because it hooked me in early with its engaging stories and theoretically sophisticated analysis. Vega crafted a beautiful narrative that allows readers to feel and visualize the Midwest: the smells, the stillness, and the gray skies that cover the sun’s shine. This is an important book that should be read by everyone who cares about the changing politics and demographics of the Midwest.

The Small-Town Midwest: Resilience and Hope in the Twenty-First Century, by Julianne Couch. Iowa and the Midwest Experience Series. Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 2016. 230 pp. Illustrations, note on sources, index. \$35.00 paperback.

Reviewer Drake Hokanson is professor emeritus at Winona State University. He is the author of *Reflecting a Prairie Town: A Year in Peterson* (1994).

With the great social and economic changes in the prairies and plains during the past several decades, what has happened to our thousands of small towns? How can we evaluate their health or somehow take full measure of these scattered and varied communities? Many main streets bear empty buildings, and often the only going businesses are the grain elevator, a convenience store, and maybe an antique store slowly selling off the collective memories of a once hopeful town. Others show signs of growth and vitality when a new industry arrives or when retirees discover quiet neighborhoods, affordable housing, and rural scenery.

Author Julianne Couch knows her small towns and is devoted to them. In *The Small-Town Midwest* she digs in to eight towns (average population 2,036) and one county scattered across five states. Two are Iowa towns: Emmetsburg and Bellevue. While in the process of writing the book, she moved from one of her subject towns, Centennial, Wyoming, and settled in Bellevue. Centennial, at the foot of the Snowy Range in Wyoming, hardly fits the description of a midwestern town, and towns from the midwestern states of Minnesota, Illinois, Indiana, and Ohio are oddly missing, but her selections are otherwise varied and interesting. Tarkio, Missouri, for example, suffered steep decline when its local college closed, while a two-year college and a casino brought new opportunities to Emmetsburg, Iowa. In Bridgeport,