

## Mexicans in Wisconsin

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Readers of the *Annals of Iowa* may take a special interest in the care with which Ladd-Taylor explains the importance of migration and settlement to (and within) Minnesota, as well as the state's colorful social and political history in telling the story of eugenic sterilization in one upper midwestern state. I highly recommend this book for use in undergraduate courses in Minnesota history and in the history of eugenics and for graduate students and experts in the field as well as general readers interested in learning more about this deeply nuanced and troubling past.

[For a fascinating account of eugenics and sterilization efforts in Iowa, see Amy Vogel, "Regulating Degeneracy: Eugenic Sterilization in Iowa, 1911-1977," *Annals of Iowa* 54 (1995), 119-43. — Ed.]

*Mexicans in Wisconsin*, by Sergio M. González. Madison: Wisconsin Historical Society Press, 2017. People of Wisconsin Series. 144 pp. Illustrations, index. \$12.95 paperback.

Reviewer Janet Weaver is assistant curator at the Iowa Women's Archives, University of Iowa Libraries. She is the author of "From Barrio to '¡Boicoteo!': The Emergence of Mexican American Activism in Davenport" (*Annals of Iowa*, 2009).

Sergio González's *Mexicans in Wisconsin* is the latest in a series of 11 "reader-friendly" books published by the Wisconsin Historical Society Press designed to provide concise introductions to the history of Wisconsin's diverse immigrants. Joining earlier publications about German, Irish, Swedish, Jewish, and other European immigrants to Wisconsin, González shines a much-needed spotlight on the migration paths of Mexicans to Wisconsin from the late nineteenth century to the present. Beginning with musician Raphael Baez, who settled in Milwaukee in 1896, González concludes with the explosive growth of Wisconsin's Latino population between 1990 and 2010 and the renewal of "anti-immigrant fervor, this time spurred on by unfounded statements made by the Republican candidate Donald Trump" (122). Employing a chronological approach, he integrates Mexicans into the fabric of Wisconsin's social, economic, and labor history, situating their life stories within the history of European immigration, war, and civil rights.

Well written, engaging, and astute, *Mexicans in Wisconsin* provides insight into the factors that fueled Mexican migration to Wisconsin throughout the twentieth century and propelled activism, from the social and economic upheaval of the Mexican Revolution to the termination of the bracero program in 1964. González contextualizes compelling individual and family stories with big-picture analysis that

holds readers' attention. He describes conditions that brought Mexicans such as Ismael Cárdenas to work in the fields and factories of Wisconsin in the 1920s. Often coming from central Mexico and traveling through the Southwest, Kansas, and Iowa before settling permanently in Wisconsin, this new wave of Mexican immigrants replaced earlier European immigrants in the state's sugar beet fields, foundries, tanneries, and railroads. As he addresses how the bracero program affected labor migration at mid-century, González analyzes the limitations of New Deal legislation that upheld poverty wages for farmworkers and the racial discrimination that precluded social mobility for many Mexican Americans in Wisconsin. Linking this to local activism, he explains how Tejano migrant workers fought for better wages and working conditions in Wisconsin's cucumber fields and describes the political mobilization led by Jesus Salas that shaped a grassroots Chicano farmworker movement in Wisconsin in the 1960s.

The rich context of local history and activism that encompasses small-town, rural, and urban spaces helps readers understand how Wisconsin's Latina/o history is similar to that of other midwestern states. Iowa, for example, reflects similar patterns of migration, employment, military service, and political activism. While the population of agricultural laborers in Iowa was relatively small in comparison to Wisconsin, there are nonetheless parallels in patterns of local resistance. Both states saw the emergence of midwestern Chicano leaders, Chicana feminism, and the formation of numerous community activist organizations that channeled black-brown and interdenominational solidarities.

The lack of footnotes or even a bibliography weakens *Mexicans in Wisconsin*. Although González—a Ph.D. candidate in history at the University of Wisconsin–Madison—does incorporate a few sources into the text of his narrative, that fails to satisfy the curiosity of readers about the original documents from which his insights and assertions are drawn. A bibliographical essay would have enabled him to situate his work within the context of other compelling scholarship that addresses Mexicans in Wisconsin, such as *The Tejano Diaspora: Mexican Americanism and Ethnic Politics in Texas and Wisconsin*, by Marc Simon Rodriguez (2011).

*Mexicans in Wisconsin* raises awareness of the need for more in-depth Latina/o histories of midwestern communities. The scholarship that is sure to follow will provide a solid base for interpreting the distinctive history of the Latina/o Midwest, redefining the field and shaping a new understanding of Latina/o and U.S. history.