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Jean Stefancic

University of Alabama - School of Law, jstefancic@law.ua.edu

Richard Delgado

University of Alabama - School of Law, rdelgado@law.ua.edu

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THE UNIVERSITY OF
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THE LATINO/A CONDITION
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Richard Delgado
Jean Stefancic

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The Latino/a Condition
A Critical Reader

Second Edition

EDITED BY

Richard Delgado and Jean Stefancic



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Introduction

Richard Delgado and Jean Stefancic

If you are a Latino, how much do you know about your own group? If you are not a Latino, perhaps a member of the majority race, how much do you know about what is now the largest ethnic group of color in the country? If the answer to either question is, "I would like to know more," this volume is written with you in mind.

With nearly a hundred tightly edited essays, this second edition of a classic collection offers an introduction to the Latino/a condition, including such topics as immigration, popular culture and stereotyping, assimilation, tensions between groups, family life, and the English-only movement. Because many issues vitally affecting Latinos, such as immigration, passports, citizenship, the census, and school, language, and workplace discrimination, end up in the courts, some of the selections are law-themed, although many are not. And with the ones that do address legal issues, we have tried to render them as nontechnically and accessibly as possible. We have placed pieces that address broad, general topics such as identity, immigration, and stereotyping early in the volume, with more specialized areas such as the family, reproduction, religion, and rap music toward the end.

Some of the contents address—or are written by—famous historical figures such as early Communist organizer Emma Tenayuca or poet-visionary-boxer Rodolfo "Corky" Gonzales. Still others are hot-off-the-press pieces addressing contemporary issues such as "sundown towns," media and talk-show racism, and Chicano rap music.

You will learn about the struggles of this growing but multifarious group for recognition, including self-recognition. What, if anything, does this group have in common, including, as it does, Mexican field workers and construction laborers; Puerto Ricans with black features and skin color who speak perfect Spanish and struggle to perfect their English; and light-skinned, well-educated Cubans operating businesses in Miami? How do Latinos see themselves? Are they one group, or many? White? Brown? Black? Or something in between?

You may read about the group's efforts to counter demeaning stereotypes such as the greaser, the bandito, the sleepy Mexican dozing under a cactus, and the romantic Don Juan figure of legend and myth. You will read about interracial marriage and romance, and the struggles of mixed-race children and adults with a foot in two or more cultures.

You will meet activist lawyers, such as the drug-taking, swashbuckling Oscar "Zeta" Acosta, who have struggled to win justice for a group long denied it. You will

learn about affirmative action for Latinos, language rights, and workplaces that demand that everyone speak English or be fired.

As we write, black and brown relations are tense, with competition for jobs, slots on city councils and school boards, and admission to top universities. Is the traditional civil rights coalition breaking down, or will old allies join hands once again to combat problems common to both groups? Is civil rights primarily an issue for African Americans, as the reigning black-white binary of race suggests, with Latinos, Asian Americans, and Indians struggling to find a place somewhere in a system designed with blacks in mind? Or will Latinos and, perhaps, other groups demand a new paradigm with roots in immigration, language rights, and respect for cultural difference?

A note about our selection process. Most of the pieces are excerpted from previously published works, although a few are new. We have sharply reduced footnotes, endnotes, references, and similar features contained in the original articles. The reader desiring to find the full pieces need only consult the attribution line, which appears at the bottom of each selection's first page. In general, we included pieces that had something to say and that said it concisely, clearly, and, if possible, entertainingly.

Many fine works could not be included in the volume. Many of these appear in the bibliographies at the end of each part. By the same token, although we aimed at broad coverage, we were unable to address every topic of potential interest to a reader seeking information on Latinos. For example, we include little on voting rights—a highly technical and evolving subject—or cultural studies, other than a few pieces dealing with stereotypes and rap music.

We believe this book will be of interest to readers desiring to become informed about ethnic affairs, demography, political science, and, of course, Latino studies. We hope to induce policy makers and public administrators charged with making decisions about poverty, schools, social services, and immigration to learn more about Latinos. Above all, we hope to reach broad-minded readers seeking to follow developments about race and social justice, and wishing to take part in an ongoing conversation about how to achieve a richer, more inclusive society. It is with all these hopes in mind that we produced this book.