



Review of Global Latin(o) Americanos: Transoceanic Diasporas and Regional Migrations

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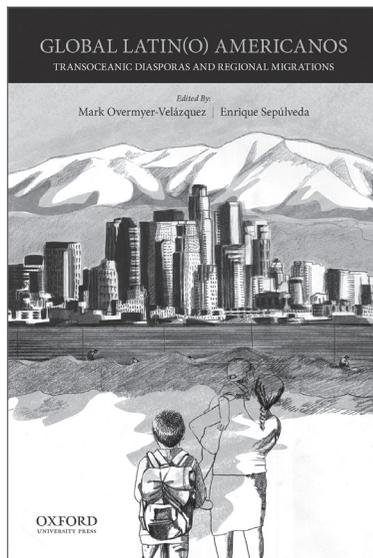


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MARCELO BORGES

Review of *Global Latin(o) Americanos: Transoceanic Diasporas and Regional Migrations*

Edited by Mark Overmyer-Velázquez and Enrique Sepúlveda III



(Oxford University Press, 2017)

Latin Americans have participated in a variety of inter-hemispheric and transoceanic movements for many decades, forming circuits of migration and contributing to diverse immigrant and diasporic communities. A long tradition of self-proclaimed exceptionalism in the United States and the country's historic pull of a large share of this population movement has contributed to the obfuscation of a more complex, multidirectional migratory phenomenon.

Global Latin(o) Americanos (Oxford University Press, 2017), edited by Mark Overmyer-Velázquez and Enrique Sepúlveda III, moves the discussion to new territories and invites readers to consider the range of migratory trajectories followed by Latin American migrants in international destinations outside the United States—in Canada, Europe, the Middle East, Asia, and a variety of Latin American countries.

The core of the book is composed of case studies of intraregional and transoceanic migratory experiences, strategies of adaptation, identity formation, and host societies' perception and reception in diverse contexts. The cases within Latin America include migrant communities of Peruvians in Chile, Bolivians in Argentina, and Nicaraguans in Costa Rica; the legacy of Haitian migrations in the contemporary Dominican Republic; and the transmigration of U.S.-bound Central American migrants in Mexico. The case studies also discuss the experiences of youth of Latin American origin in Madrid, Spain; Japanese-Brazilians in Japan; non-Jewish Latin American migrants in Israel; and communities created by political exiles from Chile after the 1973 coup in the Americas and Europe from a comparative perspective.

As this list suggests, the book covers a variety of trajectories, migration projects, and socio-cultural and political contexts. In addition, the participation of a diverse group of contributors from several disciplines (anthropology, educational studies, history, and sociology, among others) results in wide-ranging analytical approaches, discipline-specific questions, and methods.

In a volume characterized by a diversity of analytical approaches and scales, some common themes and analytical foci emerge. One major thread of discussion centers around the vulnerability of migrants. Its chapters focus on various components of vulnerability—socioeconomic, cultural, and physical—and their impacts on migrants' lives and choices

in contexts of power inequality and legal ambiguity. Migrant vulnerability is in many cases compounded by host societies' views of the immigrant as a threat to the nation, often presented through a racialized lens.

In the case of inter-American migrations, historical legacies of nation-building and territorial consolidation that manifest themselves in cases of migrations from neighboring countries further complicate this tension. This is evident in the discussion of the variety of negative reactions—from unwelcoming attitudes to legal marginalization and outright violence—to the presence of border migrants such as Peruvians in Chile, Haitians in the Dominican Republic, or Nicaraguans in Costa Rica. The impact of racialized vulnerability is not limited to experiences of labor migration and settlement, but also to transient migration. This is clearly apparent in the chapter on Central American migrants passing through Mexico. In Mexico, a historic context characterized by fear and distrust of the foreign “other” contributed to creating a situation of vulnerability and systemic violence for Central American migrants in transit, fueled by political corruption, a weak state presence, and the power of international trafficking networks.

The greater cultural and ethno-racial distance between most Latin American migrants and their host societies outside of Latin America has in some cases resulted in heightened migrant insecurity and vulnerability. But this volume complicates these notions by exploring the limitations of cultural, linguistic, and ethnic proximity on migrants' reception and adaptation. This is apparent in its comparative analysis of Latin American migrants in English- and French-speaking Canada and, more notably, in the case of Brazilians of Japanese origin in Japan. Despite common origins, local society in Japan saw Japanese-Brazilians as too foreign in cultural and behavioral terms and reacted negatively to their presence. Japanese-Brazilians, in turn, reacted to their resulting marginalization and isolation with a renewed sense of Brazilian identity in ways that contrasted sharply with their previous experience in their native Brazil.

As the last example shows, this book also explores the changing sense of belonging and identity of Latin American migrants as they move in and out of regional and transoceanic destinations and build new

communities abroad on temporary or more long-term bases. Several studies in this book explore how migrants' sense of self and place in their host countries are affected by their host societies' model of immigration—whether they view certain groups as more desirable than others, expect high levels of integration, or outright reject migrants from outside their ethno-religious core.

A precarious sense of belonging and contested ideas of citizenship often characterize the experiences of Latin American migrants. The cases in this book cover a wide range of possibilities—including the official rejection and invisibility of non-Jewish Latin Americans in Israel; the exclusion and retroactive nationality-stripping of Dominicans of Haitian origin; the emergence of international networks of solidarity and belonging among Chilean exiles; and the diasporic negotiations of belonging and transnational citizenship against an official model of full integration among youth of Latin American origin in Spain.

The space for migrants' agency in shaping responses and building alternatives within clear constraints of unequal power and vulnerability, however, receive uneven treatment in the book. Some studies show that a hostile environment and a precarious integration could contribute to the creation of a sense of common identity that transcends national origin. In this regard, the role of socioeconomic or ethno-racial differences is a theme that deserves further discussion.

This book marks a welcome addition to the scholarship of Latin American mobilities, especially for audiences in the English-speaking world. It provides an opportunity for dialogue among scholars across disciplinary boundaries, and demonstrates the analytical possibilities of bringing together discussions from a variety of national, transnational, and transregional perspectives. The emerging themes presented by the individual studies show the promising rewards of future, systematic comparative analyses of the variety of contemporary and historical migrations that have connected Latin American countries to each other and with many destinations beyond the region. ■

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