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## Review of *Mexicans in the Midwest, 1900-1932* By Juan R. Garcia

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*Mexicans in the Midwest, 1900-1932.* By Juan R. Garcia. Tucson: University of Arizona Press. Notes, bibliography, index. xi + 293 pp. \$39.95.

This is an important book on a significant and neglected topic: the immigration of Mexicans into the Midwest during the early decades of this century.

In contrast to the Southwestern US, the Midwest—with its distinctive Plains landscape and northern weather—would seem inhospitable to a predominantly working-class, Catholic, Spanish-speaking people accustomed to the desert regions and temperate weather of the central valley of Mexico. Mexican immigrants came, though—single men first and families later—“pushed” out from a Mexico in economic or civil strife and “pulled” in by the ready availability of US jobs. Using published materials, government documents, and archival sources, Juan R. Garcia clearly documents the influential role these immigrants played in the development of the Midwest region, identified here as Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, Ohio, and Wisconsin. Garcia pays most of his attention, however, to Kansas, Illinois, and Michigan, states that, for historical reasons, have larger Mexican populations and about which there is a larger amount of research material.

The book's weaknesses lie in its format and general presentation. Its repetitive layering of fact upon fact, often without a supporting narrative structure, makes reading rough-going, particularly for the non-specialist. This is unfortunate since *Mexicans in the Midwest* deserves to be accessible, in every way, to the general reader.

The large story, though, gets told—the essential story about the use of Mexican immigrant workers by US corporate interests. With variation, it is the story we have heard before about the treatment of Mexican immigrants in the Southwest: during boom economic periods when workers are needed, Mexicans are lured and recruited, sometimes unscrupulously,

only to be vilified and deported during periods of economic stress, like the depressions of 1921 and 1929, when they are no longer needed or wanted.

The fact remains, however, that Mexicans were instrumental to the development of the Midwest railroad and sugar beet industries, the Detroit automobile industry, the Chicago and Kansas City meat plants, and to steel-manufacturing during the twentieth century's first three decades—all of which is documented in this book. Garcia's work takes a fundamental step in recording the part Mexicans played in the development of the Midwest.

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