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Review of *Encyclopedia of the Mexican American Civil Rights Movement* by Matt S. Meier and Margo Gutierrez

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Encyclopedia of the Mexican American Civil Rights Movement. Matt S. Meier and Margo Gutiérrez. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2000. xii+293 pp. Notes, index. \$69.95 cloth (ISBN 0-313-30425-4).

This informative, well-written book on the Mexican American civil rights movement is a valuable reference tool. Entries include biographical sketches of leaders, histories of organizations, legal cases, legislation, court decisions, important historical events, and topics ranging from the myth of Aztlán to the Zoot Suit Riots of 1943, followed by suggestions for further reading. A chronology of the Mexican American civil rights struggle and a detailed index add to the value of the work.

The volume's contribution to knowledge of Mexican Americans on the Great Plains is limited, but the entry discussing the Midwest (150-51) gives

basic information about migration into the region, the part Chicanos played as agricultural and industrial workers, and their regional self-identification and separateness after 1970. There is no entry, however, on the sugar beet industry and its efforts to create a proletarian class of Mexican workers tied permanently to this industry on the northern Great Plains.

While the political extremes at which Mexican Americans can arrive are illustrated in various biographical sketches, a fuller discussion of how this minority group has been portrayed by themselves and others would have shed greater light on their struggle for civil rights. Racism and cultural stereotyping made them alien others to their conquerors, but economic subordination, established by 1900, made them a minority. In the twentieth century the demand for cheap Mexican labor, whether legal or illegal, begat Mexican American poverty and its consequences. Mexican Americans, even if fully employed, are largely found in what has been called the secondary labor market, the lot of workers who lack education and white-collar skills. All this being so, civil rights legislation and increased political participation on the part of Mexican Americans, unless joined to the elimination of economic deprivation, offer little hope for those who hold the poorest jobs in a bifurcated job force of haves and have-nots. **Ralph H. Vigil**, *Emeritus Professor, Department of History, University of Nebraska-Lincoln*.