

**Indigenous Mexican Migrants in the United States.** *Jonathan Fox and Gaspar Rivera-Salgado, eds.*, La Jolla, California: Center for U.S.-Mexican Studies and Center for Comparative Immigration Studies, University of California, San Diego, 2004. 525 pp.

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Indigenous Mexicans have been migrating to the United States since at least the 1950s, and in the case of P'urépecha of Michoacan, certainly before. This process has many implications. It compounds ethnically-marked segmentation in U.S. immigrant labor markets, and belies uniform

stereotypes of Mexican immigrants. It adds both energy and complications to immigrant labor and community organizing in the United States and northern Mexico. And it imposes transformative pressures on the distinctive political-social organizations of Mexican indigenous home communities, while strengthening wider coalitions in a setting historically marked by intense localism. Broadly, these dynamics pose significant challenges to the race-class structures of the interconnected U.S.-Mexico system. This vast volume brings forward a wealth of observations on these remarkable processes.

A valuable feature of the book is a comprehensive and thoughtful introduction by Jonathan Fox and Gaspar Rivera Salgado. It pays particular attention to the recent literature on transnationalism as it diagnoses how indigenous Mexican migration disrupts and transforms established conceptual categories among academics and participants alike. Their focus is on social-political organizing, as indicated in the chapter's title: "Building Civil Society Among Indigenous Migrants."

A number of chapters were written by, or include the voices of, indigenous intellectuals and organization leaders, including a roundtable discussion in chapter 3. In other chapters, Rufino Domínguez Santos narrates the emergence and maturation of FIOB (*Frente Indígena Oaxaqueña Binacional*), including problems such as factionalism and corruption. Sergio Robles Camacho discusses how return migrants have changed the political scene in the Sierra Juárez in Oaxaca, from a marked localism toward a wider regional self-conception. Centolia Maldonado, collaborating with anthropologist Patricia Artía Rodríguez, offers a particularly interesting case history of indigenous women's

collective organization rising up against a powerful *cacicazgo*. The chapters of other indigenous scholars are discussed below.

Keeping to the predominant focus on activists, a number of chapters analyze processes of dynamic self-organization in both nations. The overall sense we receive is immense creativity in the political arena. Michael Kearney and Federico Besserer point out that an important source of the drive to self-organization by migrants is partially autonomous self-government in indigenous municipalities in Oaxaca, and in reverse, they review the effects of migration back on municipal governance. María Cristina Velásquez C. makes similar points about how out-and return-migration both disrupt and renew municipal government in Mexico. She also delineates with care and precision the components of gender role change and women's empowerment. Laura Velasco Ortiz provides a similarly nuanced approach to indigenous women's involvement in activism in two settings in northern Mexico, rural and urban, involving different work and residential contexts.

Jesus Martínez-Saldña describes FIOB in action in Oaxaca and Fresno and Madera, California; the latter two case studies offer nicely differentiated observations about the kinds of issues that matter to indigenous migrant communities and the varied success of their struggles. Paul Johnston offers a case that is particularly relevant to current-day immigrant rights solidarity movements in which generationally deep Chicano leadership arose in a struggle to defend Triqui migrants in California from harassment by a local sheriff and the INS (Immigration and Naturalization Service). Lynn Stephens documents three ways that Mixtec migrants in Oregon organize themselves, as labor, by hometowns, and in a gender specific way. Finally, Gaspar

Rivera-Salgado and Luis Escala-Rabadán compare state-wide coalitions of hometown associations of Mexican migrants in the United States, contrasting indigenous Oaxacans with mestizos from Jalisco and Zacatecas.

Although political organization is the main theme of the collection, some chapters do address wider cultural and social processes. Javier Huizar Murillo and Isidro Cerda massage admittedly flawed, but useful U.S. census statistics to map the spatial distribution of “Hispanic American Indians,” who are mostly indigenous Mexicans in the United States. Edward Kissam and Ilene Jacobs provide an outstanding chapter that begins with a systematic critique of the U.S. census and mainstream census undercount research, and culminates in a thoughtful and energizing discussion of how to carry out community-directed or community-engaged social science research. Felipe López and David Runsten delineate the historical paths by which Zapotec migrants ended up in urban California and Mixtec in rural California, demonstrating the large cumulative effects of initially very small events. Bonnie Bade explores access and barriers to medical care, both biomedical and indigenous, among the Mixtecs in California and Oaxaca. This is an absolutely first rate work, in both analytical and ethnographic terms.

The vast majority of the chapters focus on Oaxacalifornia (transnational migration between Oaxaca and California). A few chapters, however, offer diversity. Garance Burke describes diverse Mayans from the Yucatan and Chiapas in the San Francisco Bay area, Ella Schmidt and María Crummett characterize Hñahñu in Hidalgo and Clearwater, Florida, and Liliana Rivera-Sánchez focuses on religiously based organizing (Guadalupan committees) among Mixtec and mestizo people

from Puebla in New York City. Warren Anderson’s chapter on P’urépecha migrants in Michoacan and southern Illinois, while not highly sophisticated, is valuable for reporting in a rich, ethnographic fashion on everyday life among indigenous migrants in the United States, above and beyond political organizing.

As several of my comments suggest, the book has some imbalances. It is heavy on Oaxaca and California, and also heavy on activists and organizations, and light on ordinary activities. One does not slight the value of intellectual attention to activism by calling for a more holistic perspective on people’s lives, as constituting the context within which activism occurs. The various authors justifiably draw on concepts like transnationalism, but the emphasis on flux, standing above and apart from conventional social-political units, perhaps obscures aspects of directionality that are occurring, including sustained settlement in the United States and the political activism that addresses concrete struggles in such places. Finally, allow me to say that the book is a fitting tribute to Michael Kearney, a pioneer in the study of indigenous Mexican migrants in the United States, though it is not offered as a formal festschrift to him (something he certainly deserves).