



Translation Nation: Defining a New American Identity in the Spanish-Speaking United States

By *Hector Tobar*

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In the national bestseller *Translation Nation*, Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist Héctor Tobar takes us on the definitive tour of the Spanish-speaking United States—a parallel nation, 35 million strong, that is changing the very notion of what it means to be an American in unprecedented and unexpected ways.

Tobar begins on familiar terrain, in his native Los Angeles, with his family's story, along with that of two brothers of Mexican origin with very different interpretations of Americanismo, or American identity as seen through a Latin American lens—one headed for U.S. citizenship and the other for the wrong side of the law and the south side of the border. But this is just a jumping-off point. Soon we are in Dalton, Georgia, the most Spanish-speaking town in the Deep South, and in Rupert, Idaho, where the most popular radio DJ is known as "El Chupacabras." By the end of the book, we have traveled from the geographical extremes into the heartland, exploring the familiar complexities of Cuban Miami and the brand-new ones of a busy Omaha INS station.

Sophisticated, provocative, and deeply human, *Translation Nation* uncovers the ways that Hispanic Americans are forging new identities, redefining the experience of the American immigrant, and reinventing the American community. It is a book that rises, brilliantly, to meet one of the most profound shifts in American identity.

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

The nation's growing Hispanic population constitutes a "Latin Republic of the United States," contends this engrossing survey of Latino America. Pulitzer Prize–winning journalist Tobar chronicles the surge in Central American immigrants to a Los Angeles where "Oliver Twist had escaped from London and was now a Spanish-speaking Angeleno in the age of crack"; listens in on the debate among Cuban exiles over Elián Gonzalez; and interviews undocumented migrants about to brave the ferociously defended Tijuana border crossings. He also follows Latinos, and their influence, into the heartland, finding a well-settled immigrant community in Dalton, Ga.; Nebraska corn farmers vying for the tortilla market; and a white Anglo Mormon who reinvents himself as a Mexican deejay for an Idaho Spanish-language radio station. Tobar insists that, thanks to their great numbers and easy access to cultural wellsprings in nearby homelands, Latinos will avoid assimilation. But he struggles to define the self-confident "Latinoness" he believes will "change the course of American history," locating it variously in a supposed resistance to "good, Protestant, money-making order"; a rejection of cultural boundaries; a taste for bright colors; and the iconography of Che Guevara. These don't really amount to the Tocquevillian insights he's aiming for, but Tobar's nuanced reportage vividly conveys the complexity and pathos of the Latino experience. (Apr.)

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From *Booklist*

Starred Review Born in Los Angeles of Guatemalan immigrant parents in the early 1960s, Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist Tobar blends his personal story of binational identity with a riveting account of how Latinos are changing the U.S. now. And not just in California, but also in the Midwest, the Great Plains, and the Deep South. Traveling from west to east across the country, he speaks to a rich variety of Spanish-speaking Americans about their stories, ideas, and hopes: illegals crossing the desert from Mexico; Cuban exiles in Miami; Puerto Ricans in New York; the Guatemalan family of a green-card Marine killed in Iraq; and many more. He also goes undercover and works the nightshift at minimum wage in a poultry factory in Alabama. Latinos are now the nation's largest minority group, but far beyond the statistics, Tobar shows that theirs is a quintessentially American story, stretching back to Tocqueville and Du Bois, Steinbeck and Upton Sinclair. Yet leaving home is not what it used to be, no longer a one-way journey across the border to a self-confident, optimistic America, but now a more ambiguous process involving constant travel back and forth, physical and emotional. In plain, stirring prose, this landmark documentary brings close the universals of exodus and displacement, as Tobar reveals the unsettling particulars of Americans who are restless and always longing for home, whatever that is. *Hazel Rochman*

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Review

"*Translation Nation*...makes the tremendous diversity, dynamism and geographical breadth of our blossoming Hispanic population come alive. That's a valuable contribution to understanding where our country is going in this new century, and I am grateful to Tobar for providing it." —*Washington Post Book World*

"Tobar captures... the current state of Latinos in the United States...with equal measures of insight and élan, giving the book an infectious optimism, an undeniable sense that the nature and scope of *latinidad* are not only expanding but becoming more inclusive as well...Compelling." —*The Los Angeles Times*

"There is a secret América that has a message for America, and Héctor Tobar is its angel. *Translation Nation* will come as a revelation to many Americans. De Tocqueville, roll over. Here comes Tobar." —Thomas Keneally, author of *Schindler's List*

"Translation Nation will be looked upon as both a cornerstone and a corrective—the kind of book that didn't just document American life, but showed us the way of the future, too." —*Dallas Morning News*

"One of the book's true gems is Tobar's gifted, breezy writing style. His eye for detail intertwined with the storytelling skills of a novelist elevate his story beyond the usual immigrant tale...those interested in how the United States' largest minority group is influencing America's food, culture and politics will be well-served by Tobar's literate efforts." —*Cleveland Plain Dealer*

"Blending his memories of growing up Guatemalan American ...with more than a decade spent visiting Latino communities in the United States, this Pulitzer Prize-winning Los Angeles Times journalist delivers an insightful meditation on the realities of modern-day Latino life." —*Latina Magazine*

"Tobar explores the vast and diverse "Latin Republic of the United States" in crisp, energetic prose...Consciously harking back to Tocqueville and other observers of the American experience, Tobar claims a place for Latinos in the evolving story of what is, after all, a very young nation of immigrants." —*Arizona Republic*

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Kimberly Thibault:

Do you have favorite book? In case you have, what is your favorite's book? Guide is very important thing for us to be aware of everything in the world. Each guide has different aim or goal; it means that book has different type. Some people feel enjoy to spend their time for you to read a book. They can be reading whatever they have because their hobby is actually reading a book. Think about the person who don't like studying a book? Sometime, man or woman feel need book when they found difficult problem or maybe exercise. Well, probably you will need this *Translation Nation: Defining a New American Identity in the Spanish-Speaking United States*.

Lula Estes:

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Arlie Carrillo:

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