



Mexican Chicago: Race, identity and Nation, 1916-39 (Statue of Liberty Ellis Island)

By Gabriela F. Arredondo

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Mexican Chicago builds on previous studies of Mexicans in the United States while challenging static definitions of “American” and underlying assumptions of assimilation. Gabriela F. Arredondo contends that because of the revolutionary context from which they came, Mexicans in Chicago between 1916 and 1939 were not just another ethnic group working to be assimilated into a city that has a long history of incorporating newcomers. Suggesting a new understanding of identity formation, she argues that Mexicans wielded tools of identification forged in revolutionary Mexico to collectively battle the prejudices of ethnic groups that included Poles, Italians, and the Irish, as well as African Americans. By turning inward, however, Mexicans also highlighted tremendous differences among themselves, such as gender and class. In discussing this distinctive process of becoming “Mexican” in Chicago during the early twentieth century, Arredondo not only explores how that identity was constructed but also provides telling insight into the repercussions of that identity formation process.

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- Sales Rank: #372755 in Books
- Published on: 2008-03-18
- Original language: English
- Number of items: 1
- Dimensions: 9.00" h x .70" w x 6.00" l, .93 pounds
- Binding: Paperback
- 272 pages

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Review

“Arredondo paints a portrait of Mexican Chicago in the early 20th century, focusing on five zones of contact: housing patterns, work and labor relations, politics, commerce, and heterosocial relations. Recommended”--*Choice*

“This volume enriches a substantial body of literature in Chicana/o urban history ... [and] it stands out from other publications by its consciously middle-class focus and concern with identity issues.”--*American Historical Review*

“Mexican Chicago is elegantly written and deeply researched in a wide range of sources. . . . [It] contributes to the growing scholarship on Mexican Americans outside the Southwest and enlivens the discussion about immigration, race, and identity.”--*Journal of American History*

About the Author

Gabriela Arredondo is an associate professor of Latin American and Latina/o Studies, University of California, Santa Cruz, and coeditor of *Chicana Feminisms: Disruptions in Dialogue*.

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