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***Reading, Writing, and Revolution: Escuelitas and the Emergence of a Mexican American Identity in Texas.* Barragán-Goetz, P. M. University of Texas Press. 2020. pp. 248 pages ISBN: 978-1-4773-2091-4 Hardcover \$45**

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The book *Reading, Writing, and Revolution: Escuelitas and the Emergence of a Mexican American Identity in Texas* by Philis M. Barragán-Goetz brilliantly brings to the forefront how escuelitas shaped ethnic Mexican leaders in the community and served as a foundational framework for Mexican American studies in the United States. The author states, “it is a forgotten narrative of how ethnic Mexicans...for generations, unfolded at the crossroads of language and education, race and identity, and survival and conquest—reacted and progressed as they settled into the idea of becoming Mexican Americans” (p. 3). While the United States educational experience was centered around making good Americans, the escuelitas accented the hyphenated experience for young Mexican children, teaching them how to navigate the part of their identity that society and politicians were requesting they drop. Barragán-Goetz explains that in the historiographical narrative of Mexican education in Texas that the politics of ethnic Mexican education significantly impacted the role of escuelitas (p. 2). In fact, Barragán-Goetz frames escuelitas as a tool of cultural resistance against western hegemonic forces in the Mexican American experience.

This book covers the history of escuelitas in five chapters, recovering issues surrounding escuelitas in a linear temporal analysis from 1865 to 1950. The geographical focus is primarily the borderlands region of Texas. Sources used in this historiographical investigation are newspaper articles, state department reports, census records, department of education records, historiographies, photos, and reference maps. It is impossible to know the exact number of students that went to escuelitas, yet Barragán-Goetz makes every effort to uncover important information, using evidence in the Spanish-Language Press, oral histories, and superintendent reports. (p. 13)

Barragán-Goetz's Note On Terminology indicates her depth of understanding the complexities of ethnic experiences in the Borderlands. "In the 1980s, Mario T. Garcia first articulated his conceptual framework for what he called 'The Mexican American Generation' in an attempt to understand these men and women activists who were full of contradictions—contradictions that seemed especially egregious in a post-Chicano movement world." (p. 127). Barragán-Goetz uses this term that serves as a framework to historicize the methods used to approach civil rights activism. Throughout the analysis, a claim is made that the generation that last benefitted from *escuelitas* both brought about the demise of the *escuelitas* and birthed the Chicano Movement. Fundamentally *escuelitas* helped ethnic Mexican children negotiate their education and identity in the United States. However, their success ironically facilitated the demise of *escuelitas* by encouraging them to solidify their agency, channel that into activism, and fight for inclusion in white-only public schools, which ultimately was achieved.

Barragán-Goetz begins her analysis with two different time periods in *escuelita* history. The first is from 1865 to 1884, and second from 1884 to 1910. The 1910s analysis includes the Mexican Consulate's examination of the treatment of ethnic Mexican school children in Texas Public Schools. The Congreso Mexicanista called for an end to educational discrimination, lynchings, and land theft (Montejano, p. 116). *La Crónica* and the Idár family paid attention to the segregation of ethnic Mexican children and Barragán-Goetz argues that *La Crónica* brought to the forefront attention to the politicization of education. Jovita Idár as well as Leonor Villegas de Magnón, María Villarreal and María Rentería established *escuelitas* in Laredo from 1910 to 1920. Beginning with the quote, "Cada vez que se educa a niña se funda una *escuelita*. [Each time you educate a girl you found an *escuelita*.]" "Pensamientos y Aforismos," *La Prensa*, February 5, 1920.

Post-Mexican Revolution, Barragán-Goetz examines the shift for ethnic Mexican children from *escuelitas* to American public schools and analyzes the Mexican government's motives for funding and encouraging *escuelitas* in the 1920s and 1930s. Using oral histories from teachers and students of the 1930s-1950s, Barragán-Goetz argues that although the Mexican government intended to enforce hegemonic forces, students benefited from them in ways that surpassed any elements of control or indoctrination.

The activist movements of the post-world American generation shaped by *escuelitas* and provided students with the tools they needed to advocate for equity in education. Barragán-

Goetz challenges other scholars and disciplines to expand the focus of The Mexican American Generation from a narrow male-dominated space to include the women activists who worked tirelessly to address issues of education and civil rights. There were two main goals of those influenced by *escuelitas*: to get their curriculum taught in schools, and to use the model to teach children English, and women were at the center of this work.

In the context of the history of the education of ethnic Mexicans after 1848, the stories of *escuelitas* allow for the reclamation of heroes and pedagogical legacies. Barragán-Goetz frames *escuelita* history as the origin story for Mexican American studies (MAS) in the United States. Thus, MAS classrooms are providing a decolonizing space that is liberating education for students. “The *escuelitas* were the first place where an alternative narrative that was focused on ethnic Mexican’s experiences emerged, and where that narrative belongs- in its own space or integrated into the dominate one- is a question we have yet to answer today” (p. 17).

*Reading, Writing, and Revolution: Escuelitas and the Emergence of a Mexican American Identity in Texas* contextualizes the history of *escuelitas* in Texas History since 1848. Barragán-Goetz has produced a dynamic addition to the scholarship of Mexican American Studies, Texas history, and United States educational history. Goetz brings to the forefront the struggle of where this narrative belongs, either integrated into the dominant history/curriculum or as a cultural or ethnic studies alternative. The demand grows for Mexican American Studies across the United States and this historiography will inform the next generations of MAS educators and students.

### References

Montejano, D. (1987). *Anglos and Mexicans: In the Making of Texas, 1836-1986*. University of Texas Press.