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Mike Amezcua, Making Mexican Chicago: From Postwar Settlement to the Age of Gentrification (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2022)

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made on the legislative front. Indeed, the story told here is largely one of collusion between legislators, industrial employers, and, perhaps most surprisingly, the civil servants responsible for public health, all of whom tacitly agreed to tolerate the consequences of the fabrication of white lead in return for industrial progress and economic gain – what Rainhorn, following Geneviève Massard-Guilbaud, calls the cult of the “smoking chimney” (12). Moments of increased “perceptibility” of danger occurred in the 1840s and 1850s, when white zinc was proposed by some as a safe substitute for white lead, and again in the early 1900s, when the unions of building workers, especially house painters, mobilized and when France adopted, in 1909, legislation outlawing the use of lead paint. Yet the legislation adopted in 1919, only a decade later, which integrated industrial diseases, including lead poisoning, into workplace accidents legislation and thus compensated occurrences of such diseases, was a tacit recognition that white lead, like other toxins, had not disappeared from French workplaces. In the wake of the Great War, efforts by the International Labour Office, led by France, Belgium, and Italy, to draft international conventions banning or regulating the use of lead-based paint were ultimately successful, but met with significant resistance from English-speaking and German-speaking nations, as well as from Spain, which was, like Australia and the United States, an important producer of lead.

Rainhorn ends her study by discussing the numerous cases of infantile lead poisoning brought to the public’s attention in late twentieth-century France. The vast majority of these cases involved the children of migrants from Sub-Saharan Africa, growing up in the inadequate housing of Parisian suburbs and ingesting the lead from the paint peeling off the walls of these apartments neglected

by landlords and the state. As the author notes, what had for centuries been a workplace risk has become a larger environmental risk, one that was, incidentally, brought to the public’s attention again in 2019 when Paris’s famed Notre Dame Cathedral burned, releasing huge quantities of lead dust into the air. Rainhorn concludes her book by reflecting on the ultimately modest nature of the gains secured by periodic mobilizations around white lead and on the tenacity of our collective willingness to tolerate these everyday poisons.

Blanc de plomb is anchored in the sociology of risk and deeply rooted in the international historiography, notably the social and environmental histories produced by scholars of France, Belgium, the United Kingdom, and the United States. Its author also draws upon the work of Canadian historians such as Michelle Murphy, whose research on sick building syndrome did much to develop the concept of “regimes of perceptibility.” Canadian scholars, perhaps especially those studying histories of resource extraction, familiar with the consequences for workers of sustained contact with asbestos and silica, will find much to meditate here in this compelling and beautifully written work of historical research.

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Mike Amezcua, *Making Mexican Chicago: From Postwar Settlement to the Age of Gentrification* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2022)

WHERE JOBS EXISTED in Chicago, ethnic Mexican workers, men, and women arrived at barrios to fill them. They consisted of US citizens going back generations—a rare number linked to the US war of aggression against Mexico in

1846—as well as migrant nationals, from the long-time denizen to the greenhorn, the authorized, and *sin papeles* (the unauthorized). No matter their residency status, the worker-hungry industries of agriculture, manufacturing, meatpacking, and mining recruited a hyper-exploitable surplus pool of labour to realize capitalism's insatiable ambition: profit maximization. Scholars have studied the acculturation of ethnic Mexicans, but what was the process of settlement after their initial arrival at commercial-industrial hubs? And how did this residential progression follow, especially as ethnic whites moved to Bungalow Belts as the city's economy deindustrialized?

Historian Mike Amezcua's trenchant *Making Mexican Chicago: From Postwar Settlement to the Age of Gentrification* meticulously addressed these fundamental questions by profiling ethnic Mexican agents of real estate, community, labour, and politics in the service of their communities. No matter their individualized vocations and temperaments, they complemented each other in their mutual goal to self-determine on behalf of their *gente*, people, how their respective communities would be defined as they refused to be pawns at the complete mercy of Chicago's institutions dominated by white ethnics. The political machine of Mayor Richard J. Daley stood at the center of this milieu after World War II until the early 1970s.

Therefore, what united an entrepreneurial class of ethnic Mexicans with activists more oriented toward social justice and community empowerment was their shared goal to make sure that the residential needs of their *Raza*, compatriots, were recognized and respected. Some embedded themselves within the partisan system as Democrats and others as Republicans; more militant Chicagoans eschewed both parties

during the Chicano movement of the 1960s and 1970s. In this regard, Amezcua analyzes, rather subtly, the transformation of Chicago's ethnic Mexican community from a transgenerational lens of the Mexican, Mexican American, and Chicano across the eras of the Cold War and Vietnam.

More aligned with a politically moderate faction, Anita Villareal shattered fixed notions of ethnic Mexican womanhood. As a real estate broker and property manager in a white-male industry, she was determined to be economically independent while servicing the housing needs of her clientele of migrant Mexicans, first as renters and then as homebuyers. With the flexibility of being lucratively self-employed, Villareal joined Daley's Democratic machine. As fundraising and voter mobilization were the catalysts behind political power, Villareal hoped that Daley's patronage system would reward her community to the extent to which it could be energized, at least over time. But she could not accept eventual political opportunities for appointed or elected office in Chicago as her real estate acumen had gained her a cash flow too handsome to be sacrificed. So instead, she sponsored the selection of ethnic Mexican politicians in her place. As a result, her community could no longer be ignored to the extent that it had previously been.

Thus, Villareal was no revolutionary, as she did not harbour any open opposition to the speculative, if not predatory, character of real estate and Chicago's larger political spoils system. Indeed, besides the achievement of financial independence, her main concern was ensuring that her community of ethnic Mexicans, which consisted of neighbours and fellow entrepreneurs, had an equal chance to thrive in the extant systems of capitalism and politics.

Consequently, however, other change agents were not so patient. Equally reformist, if not more conservative politically, people such as Martin G. Blanco and others not as entrepreneurial and more on the left, like Rachel Cordero and Mary Gonzales, shunned Chicago's Democratic machine politics as they witnessed how Daley, his white liberal operatives, and organizers such as Saul Alinsky refused to address the general needs of their *gente*, people; in fact, the opposite occurred as Chicago shot callers further segregated their *Raza* and Black residents. So, a Brown capitalist class sided with the Republican party while grassroots activists joined an eclectic array of organizations that arose during the *el movimiento* such as the Latin American Alliance for Social Progress, Committee of United Latins, and Movimiento Artístico Chicano, to name a few, committed to the values of cultural nationalism, liberation, and self-determination in relation to a residential renaissance ultimately proposed in the *Pilsen Neighborhood Plan* of 1976.

Conversely, people who shared Blanco's impatience with the abstemious patronage funnelled from President Lyndon Johnson's War on Poverty were impressed by President Richard Nixon's Brown capitalist ethos and Hispanic political appointments. It is in this story that Amezcua complements the narrative of Nixon being a mastermind of racial divide-and-conquer politics. As the author notes, "Nixon waged a 'Southern strategy'-style campaign to undermine and divide the Latino vote by encouraging third-party efforts..." (171) This involved supporting the *La Raza Unida* Party as well as pitting Black and Brown interests against each other.

So where *Making Mexican Chicago* is also an examination of how ethnic Mexicans became Mexican Americans

who internalized, if not consciously accepted, a racial capitalism, in this case in real estate, Amezcua aptly contrasts the conservative, if not accommodationist, nature of ethnic Mexican entrepreneurs against community activists by assiduously narrating the evolution of the Chicano movement in the Windy City in relation to national civil rights drives and hemispheric decolonial movements abroad. Amezcua provides a revisionist perspective on Alinsky's cunningness – as sponsor of the Community Service Organization in California in relation to César Chávez, the eventual founder of the United Farm Workers union, and his mentor Fred Ross – that accommodated the racism of ethnic whites of Czechoslovakian, Italian, and Polish ancestry through residential segregation of ethnic Mexicans and African Americans. Such liberal machinations insidiously maneuvered Brown residents as a buffer community to distance white suburbs from direct contact with Black Chicagoans.

In all, *Making Mexican Chicago* is a critical contribution to the historiography of ethnic Mexican urban settlement in the second half of the 20th century. This is particularly true as Amezcua successfully conveys to the reader the righteous indignation that fueled the Chicano movement's rise while encapsulating the complexity of community politics in a prose that demands close concentration on the part of the reader. Hence, the audiences that will benefit most from this study are scholars and graduate students.

In closing, the excellence of the author's research and storytelling could have been advanced further by a section within the book's introduction on the historiography of the making of Mexican Chicago during the first half of the 20th century. This omission, however, is offset by how Amezcua commendably presents

the vibrant *animo* that motivated people such as Villareal, Blanco, and Gonzales to struggle on behalf of their people.

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Adolph L. Reed, Jr., with a foreword by Barbara J. Fields, *The South: Jim Crow and its Afterlives* (New York: Verso, 2022)

I AM OLD ENOUGH that I occasionally find myself challenged by a younger generation of anti-racist scholars and activists who insist that “nothing has changed” since the civil rights revolution of the 1960s overthrew formal, legal segregation in the American south. My frequent retort is that as late as the mid-sixties, for Black people, much of the South remained nothing less than a totalitarian society. Challenging the myriad and complex presumptions of white domination, by word or deed, would result in severe and swift retribution, even death, at the hands of fellow citizens or the state. For all that, as Adolph Reed, Jr. points out in his compelling memoir, *The South*, that regime was actually reproduced in mundane fashion, in largely unquestioned “little rituals of deference and superiority” (4) that shaped daily life and, for Blacks, ensured survival. Ultimately, Reed is interested in how the “official and unofficial protocols” of the Jim Crow regime “organized people’s lives.” (6)

As Barbara Fields points out in her characteristically incisive foreword to *The South*, as an “outside insider,” Reed is perfectly poised to measure the degree of transformation and persistence in the region he has sometimes called home. A scholar and activist notorious for his penetrating critiques of identitarian politics and their frequent obfuscation of class dynamics, Reed poignantly and

perceptively revisits his childhood in the 1950s and the 1960s in New Orleans. Yet, as someone who was born in New York and frequently travelled back and forth between North and South, Reed (b. 1947) admits that Jim Crow’s “regime was never fully second nature” (13) to him even though he is of the last generation that lived it.

Segregation in post-World War II New Orleans was exceedingly complex. For example, as Reed points out, Blacks and whites often resided in the same neighbourhood (especially in *older* neighbourhoods), even on the same block. Nevertheless, they “didn’t share neighborhoods so much as coexist in them” (16), with segregation applied or relaxed according to an unspoken situational code. The more insulated the encounter was from “the spotlight of public scrutiny,” (20) the more likely the strictures of Jim Crow were to be relaxed, Reed claims. The ambiguous colour line in New Orleans, as Reed acknowledges, was also mediated by Catholicism, as well as the propinquity of Jews and Italians as neighbours and shopkeepers. The latter groups, while certainly considered “white” by law, also had to negotiate the antisemitism and nativism of their fellow white folks.

Despite such chinks in the armor of white supremacy, Reed is quite clear that Blacks in Jim Crow New Orleans remained second-class citizens, and that they justly “perceived the role of the police somewhere between antebellum slave patrols and an occupying army” (28) Nor does he harbour any illusions that the occasional interpersonal deviations from Jim Crow were “politically charged moments stolen by conspirators,” (28) who secretly dissented from the social order of segregation. Moreover, the terms of such “fleeing instances of unrestrained decency” (29) were always set by whites.

I do think Reed may understate the degree to which New Orleans’ “phenotypic