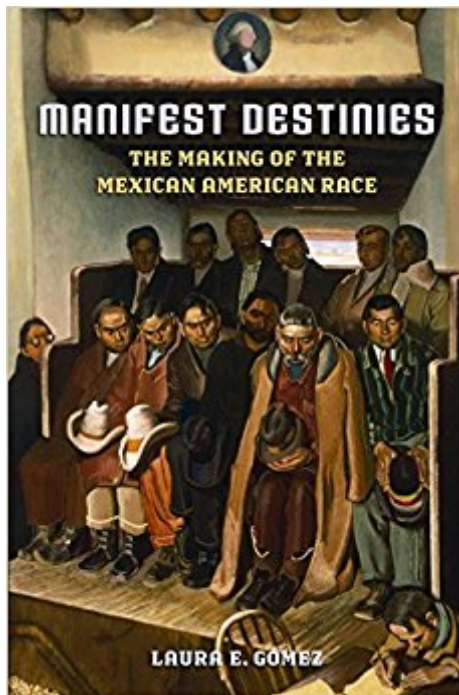


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Manifest Destinies: The Making Of The Mexican American Race



Synopsis

Watch the Author Interview on KNME In both the historic record and the popular imagination, the story of nineteenth-century westward expansion in America has been characterized by notions of annexation rather than colonialism, of opening rather than conquering, and of settling unpopulated lands rather than displacing existing populations. Using the territory that is now New Mexico as a case study, *Manifest Destinies* traces the origins of Mexican Americans as a racial group in the United States, paying particular attention to shifting meanings of race and law in the nineteenth century. Laura E. GÃmez explores the central paradox of Mexican American racial status as entailing the law's designation of Mexican Americans as "white" and their simultaneous social position as non-white in American society. She tells a neglected story of conflict, conquest, cooperation, and competition among Mexicans, Indians, and Euro-Americans, the region's three main populations who were the key architects and victims of the laws that dictated what one's race was and how people would be treated by the law according to one's race. GÃmez's path breaking work spanning the disciplines of law, history, and sociology reveals how the construction of Mexicans as an American racial group proved central to the larger process of restructuring the American racial order from the Mexican War (1846-48) to the early twentieth century. The emphasis on white-over-black relations during this period has obscured the significant role played by the doctrine of Manifest Destiny and the colonization of northern Mexico in the racial subordination of black Americans.

Book Information

Paperback: 242 pages

Publisher: NYU Press (September 1, 2008)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 9780814732052

ISBN-13: 978-0814732052

ASIN: 0814732054

Product Dimensions: 5.9 x 0.6 x 8.8 inches

Shipping Weight: 12 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.4 out of 5 stars 7 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #85,896 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #58 in Books > Textbooks > Humanities > History > Latin America #64 in Books > Politics & Social Sciences > Social Sciences > Specific Demographics > Hispanic American Studies #71 in Books > History >

Customer Reviews

“Gomez has made a fine and distinctive contribution to our understanding of how conquest and law shaped the ambiguous racial position still occupied by Mexican Americans.”
-American Historical Review
“In her discussion of the role of law in the creation of Mexican Americans as a racial group *Gémez* tells a convincing story of conquerors manipulating the conquered.”
-The Santa Fe New Mexican
“Shows the impacts (then, as now) of the dominant white racist frame coming in from outside what was once northern Mexico.”
-Racism Review
“In this provocative analysis, the sociologist and legal scholar Laura E. *Gémez* offers a compelling argument for the unique racial status of Mexican Americans, significant (and increasing) proportions of whom identify as nonwhite | her steady focus and original approach make *Manifest Destinies* essential reading for scholars of race in America.”
-Journal of American History
“Laura E. *Gémez*’s *Manifest Destinies* offers a new interpretation of the ideology of Manifest Destiny and how that ideology worked to create a Mexican American race in New Mexico.”
-Hispanic American Historical Review

Laura E. *Gémez* is Professor of Law, Sociology and Chicana/o Studies at the University of California, Los Angeles. She is the author of *Misconceiving Mothers: Legislators, Prosecutors and the Politics of Prenatal Drug Exposure* and the editor of *Mapping Race: Critical Approaches to Health Disparities Research* (with Nancy *López*).

Well researched, based on statistics and facts rather than opinion or racial assumptions. This is an analysis and reporting that reminds us that race and prejudice are alive today, and that the victims of racial prejudice are often contributing to the problem. We of Hispanic backgrounds are aware of racial sectioning, and yet think of our difference as cultural or ethnic. Yet we make racial distinctions without meaning to, even among Hispanics. The United States is rife with racial perspective, and "finding our place on the American scene" can mean finding where we fit in the racial spectrum. This is buying into the scourge of racism. I realize now that my own assumptions and language put me in "the belly of the beast," by contributing to a racial perspective on what it means to be Hispanic or Latino (or whatever the magic word is today).

I couldn't put this book down. If your of mexican origin or especially if your from Nuevo Mexico of mexican origin your going to love the book. At times a bit tedious and disconcerting but always revealing. I just could never have imagined that race was so contentious and so defining an issue in this country for so many years. When I first saw my birth certificate and read that it said white I thought it couldn't be right because I knew I wasn't the same as the "white" kids I played with at home and in school. What an eye opener this book was and with family in New Mexico it makes it makes the book so personally relevant. I highly recommend if for no other reason then to compare how far we've come from then to now and how much furthermore we still have to go. There's so much that's left out of being taught in school specially as pertaining to race, history, etc. Read this book and especially now with race again being a big issue. We now have a black president but no doubt some people want him to fail if for no other reason that he's black. Then there's immigration and the hoopla that goes with that so the book is relevant and interesting. Thoroughly enjoyed and it's especially educational.

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A Real Education. Thank you. I am white and recently moved to Taos from San Francisco. I have lived in New Orleans and New York for the past 60 years and am no stranger to diverse ethnic and racial people. When I moved to Taos, I wanted to learn everything I could about not only the history of the land but the people and the culture of this very different 'world,' New Mexico. I find New Mexico to be one of the most unique areas of the United States, very much like Creole Louisiana. I have read many, many books on the history of New Mexico since arriving and find Laura's book to 'hit the mark,' bulls-eye, on giving the best history, at least for me, on the history of the people of New Mexico. A very well written and scholarly researched book.

The storytelling is very well done. It is clearly researched thoroughly and Ms. Gomez does an excellent job of interweaving the personal narratives and histories with her overall thesis. From top to bottom, she crafts a compelling argument that is substantiated by the enthralling stories of those people from both sides and their unique perspectives in the incorporation of Mexicans into the United States after the Mexican American War. However, with respect to her original thesis she falls short. Often times she makes jumps in logic that are not logically tied to the information provided. She falls victim to a habit of putting the engaging personal stories as separate from the pieces that tie back into her initial claims. There are also portions where she makes sweeping assumptions that

detract from her arguments, while simultaneously bending instances that do not agree with her historiography in her own direction:"The trials occurred during the war, and military leaders might well have killed all of those captured or executed them after courts-martial." "More than anything, it was New Mexico's racial make-up that accounted for its lengthy status as a federal territory." These jumps in logic are not adequately supported by Ms. Gomez. Unfortunately this theme is persistent throughout the novel and takes away from a very well written piece.

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