

To complicate these social strata, Alarid offers, some Nuevomexicanos “forged treaties with the Comanche, and the Pueblos followed,” showing that political power was anything but stagnant (7). Following the US intervention in 1847, New Mexican patrones “worked alongside older white [Anglo] immigrants to acquire property and increase their influence” (14). The exploration of nineteenth-century New Mexico is an excellent case study for how racialized communities—Nuevomexicanos, not only detribalized Native people, enslaved people, Indigenous nations, and Anglos—negotiated power, security, and land, but also subverted each other.

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MEXICAN POLITICS, COMMUNITY HISTORIES, AND THE BRACERO PROGRAM

Abandoning Their Beloved Land: The Politics of Bracero Migration in Mexico. By Alberto García. Oakland: University of California Press, 2023. Pp. 260. \$85.00 cloth; \$29.95 paper; \$25.00 e-book.
 doi:10.1017/tam.2023.73

Alberto García argues that “bracero migration was a deeply politicized process shaped by a complex web of national, regional, and local factors” (4). “[B]racero migration,” he maintains, “cannot be fully explained as a strictly socioeconomic phenomenon wherein Mexican officials dispassionately identified impoverished campesinos who stood to benefit materially from migrating” (4). To support his central claim in this book, García explores local Mexican politics, including the effects of the Cristero War (1926-29) between conservative Catholics and the Mexican federal government, the short-changing of *ejidatarios* under agrarian reform, and the power of municipal governments in the bracero selection process.

García concludes from these examples that “these findings provide nuance to an enduring but relatively simple narrative regarding the factors that fuel Mexican migration to the United States, one that treats the migration phenomenon as a straightforward socioeconomic affair that can be effectively managed via government intervention” (152).

The book’s five chapters are arranged around different experiences of the Bracero Program and supported by an introduction, a conclusion, illustrations, and a full 58 pages of endnotes. These underscore “the limits of the postrevolutionary Mexican state’s administrative capacities and the broad array of political factors that prompted migratory departures” (149-50). Rather than tell the stories of the Bracero Program in a strictly chronological fashion, García dedicates the first chapters of his book to

top-down experiences of the program by focusing on the “frustrated ambitions” and “on-the-fly policy” of Mexican federal authorities (16). These experiences are covered in Chapter 1, “‘The Urgent Need to Regulate Departures’: Federal-Level Administration of the Bracero Program,” and Chapter 2, “‘According to the Jurisdiction’s Necessities’: State-Level Administration of the Bracero Program.” In the second half of the book, he highlights local histories of the primary bracero-sending states—Aguascalientes, Guanajuato, Jalisco, Michoacán, and Zacatecas, for example, in Chapter 5, “‘A ‘Mockery of Responsibility’: Municipal-Level Administration of the Bracero Program” (121).

García’s ability to employ crisp and accessible prose deftly to mesh extensive existing literature with his new archival findings lends the book one of its main strengths. For example, his research in Chapter 3, “‘Long-Standing Political and Religious Differences’: Political-Religious Conflicts and the Bracero Migration in the Greater Bajío,” successfully pairs thousands of bracero contract requests from civilians with federal, state, and municipal archival sources, contributing to historiography on the Catholic Church and the Greater Bajío as well as on the bracero program (71).

The achievement of illuminating both local Mexican politics and community histories and the Bracero Program as a whole is no small feat, particularly when historical authors deliberately riddled their sources with omissions, exaggerations, rumors, and cover-ups in their efforts to meet their personal goals within the bracero program (see 89, 106, and 132 for examples). In addition to demonstrating a masterful understanding of historical trends and themes throughout his work, García compellingly identifies sites of future research, such as the Caribbean Farmworker Program, and forges connections to modern political contexts in his book’s conclusion (151, 154). Such analysis amplifies the significance of his own research and, perhaps even more important, encourages readers to continue the conversations of this book in ways that transcend its physical pages.

García’s book emphasizes previously unstudied and under-studied political complexities of the Bracero Program. His deliberate and thorough consideration of federal and local Mexican history allows García to reframe familiar stories of the program, such as socioeconomic explanations of this migration that persist even today in public memory, in less familiar ways. As García concludes, “[T]he Bracero Program was shaped by the political calculations of the officials who administered it *and* the campesinos who decided to migrate” (13). Seasoned scholars and students new to this field will find much to consider in this definitive and exceedingly praiseworthy work of Mexican migration history.

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