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The Latino Threat: Constructing Immigrants, Citizens, and the Nation. Leo R. Chavez. Reviewed by Barbara Robles.

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Leo R. Chavez, *The Latino Threat: Constructing Immigrants, Citizens and the Nation*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2008. \$21.95 papercover.

This book offers the reader a deep and compelling assessment of what 21st century geopolitics has in store for a country with an immigrant past, present and future by addressing the issue of the Latino experience in the United States. The author uncovers and carefully dissects the past immigrant narrative that produced the myth of the American Dream and American ingenuity, while assessing what the current state of Latino immigration means for America. The remaining question becomes: where do we go from here?

The book weaves together issues of global consumption of constructed 'spectacle' as representations of cultures and the 'other.' It addresses the thorny issue of what citizenship means today and why the inherent contradictions in identity and belonging have risen at this juncture in history. We are given examples of how such contradictions are navigated by laying blame elsewhere 'among the others' (Latinos) as we encounter the social construction of the immigrant as sexual and fertile, reproducing to 'overtake' the legitimate, again constructed, face of America. But within the debate of reproduction lies the seed of future fiscal pressures: who will care for and subsidize the well-being of retirees and the elderly? As stereotypes and constructed profiles of the undeserving and unauthorized users of social and health services, the racialized, immigrant 'them' proliferate in the 24/7 visually-driven news media, the unasked question remains: who will be providing in-home and hospital-oriented health care workers and health care tax subsidies if not 'them'? The author uncovers the persistent image of 'takers' while the reality of economic and nation-state 'givers and contributors' rarely receives media air-time or print space.

The second half of the book delves into issues of 'border' security and irrelevancy in an era characterized by a geo-mobile labor force. Finance and physical capital have long been the winners in a borderless global community, but labor remains the unaddressed linchpin of 'free market' economies: no labor, no services, no consumption, no taxes. When a nation forgets

that labor is also the consumer, the voter, the taxpayer, the citizen, we break with a fundamental understanding of economic arrangements and become a nation in search of a new economic regime. When immigration and immigrants are cast as the culprits in an economic system moving away from balanced competition into markets morphing into static oligopolies and monopolies, we face the unexamined frustrations of a formerly secure locally-anchored labor force unable to turn on the source of their paycheck. Immigration, and thus, immigrants become the focus point for the pent-up frustrations created by the political and economic reforms left unaddressed and abandoned during the last century.

Consider for a moment what the long-term implications of a totally enforced, limited entry immigration policy enacted in the United States would entail. First, all families would have to be subsidized for reproduction capacity as well as complete day-care coverage in order for current workers to continue working while reproducing the country's future labor force. Next, universal health care would have to be mandated in order for current workers to remain 'healthy' enough to continue working and being productive. Universal higher education must also be free to incentivize more basic research in the hard sciences, bio-sciences, engineering and technology fields in order to capitalize on entrepreneurial innovations, thus maintaining global market presence. Stronger and more generous universal elder care must be implemented, especially if the country's reproduction is only at replacement level and does not display sufficient fertility augmentation, since our current retirement system depends upon the number of current workers supporting retirees. Finally, massive investments in current infrastructure replacement will be needed in order for the costs of human investments to generate a substantial return to future generations.

Clearly, American political will to engage in the types of political and economic reforms necessary for long-run domestic well-being has not materialized. In our refusal to engage in necessary reforms, Chavez provides us with an overview of the consequences of such disengagement: media reportage dehumanizing immigrants and foreign 'others,' massive immigrant marches and anti-immigrant counter-marches, the

rise of nativism and nationalism provoked by self-appointed 'border watchers' and 'anti-immigrant and specifically anti-Latino hardliners' reminiscent of past economic-hard times elsewhere. The author offers a comprehensive understanding of the construction of 'identity' and 'narrative' making by unpacking our unexamined notions of citizenship and nationalism. Of equal importance, he provides us with the knowledge of how we can go about 'deconstructing' such socially crafted narratives.

Barbara Robles, Arizona State University

Erin E. O'Brien. *The Politics of Identity: Solidarity Building Among America's Working Poor*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2008. \$80.00 hardcover, \$28.95 paperback.

The author is an Assistant Professor of Political Science at the University of Massachusetts Boston. The book is based upon a comparative case study involving semi-structured interviews with 48 low-wage service workers employed at a hotel given the pseudonym MJE. Though the bulk of poor individuals who are employed may consider themselves part of the so-called "working class," scholars have consistently reported on the lack of political solidarity amongst America's working poor population. A predominant view is that this lack of solidarity may be attributed to the working poor's diverse demographic characteristics, including race, ethnicity, and gender. In other words, any solidarities they may develop are based on demographics, not class.

Chapter 1 challenges this view, asserting that one of the primary aims of the book is to reveal how solidarities are defined and developed by the working poor. Chapter 2 describes the workers' explanations of the difficulties they face in their workplace. Moreover, very few define themselves as the "working poor." Instead, those who articulated notions of group identification or consciousness did so with identities based on demographic characteristics such as race, ethnicity, and gender. In chapter 3, the author introduces the concept of coalitional solidarity as the phenomenon in which workers formed a bond, or political solidarity, with a group