



Latino War Narratives, Culture and History

Autobiographies and Narratives

Acosta, Oscar Zeta. *Autobiography of a Brown Buffalo*. New York: Vintage, 1989.

Acosta's autobiography explores issues of race, masculinity, and growing up during WWII the son of a Mexican father who has become an enthusiastic American and a mother who sings songs from the homeland. Throughout his narrative, Acosta questions established American values and forges his own original voice, free from traditional ideas concerning Mexican identity. Generally, his counterculture ideology is a response to American culture during WWII.

Augenbraum, Harold and Ilan Stavan, ed. *Growing Up Latino: Memoirs and Stories*. New York: Mariner Books, 1993.

Augenbraum, a librarian, and Stavans bring together personal narratives by some of the most influential Latino authors in one excellent volume. All of these autobiographical pieces explore and question what it means to grow up Latino in the United States and many take place during the WWI era. Authors included are Oscar Zeta Acosta, Rudolfo Anaya, Sandra Cisneros, Gloria Anzaldua, Edward Rivera, and a selection from Jose Antonio Villareal's seminal novel *Pocho*. The introduction is especially helpful and serves as a historical overview of Latino personal narratives.

History Books

Acuña, Rodolfo. *Occupied America: A History of Chicanos (6th Edition)*. New York Longman, 2006.

Occupied America is more like an informative textbook for Chicano history courses, rather than a leisurely read. The historical time frame is quite broad, reaching back to Mesoamerican civilizations all the way to issues of immigration, labor, education, and equality during the last 100 years, including the WWI era. This extensive reference book covers the major occurrences in Mexican history, as well as explores the complicating factors of race, gender and class in forming Chicano identity.

Gonzalez, Juan. *Harvest of Empire: A History of Latinos in America*. New York: Penguin Group, 2001.

In *Harvest of Empire* Gonzalez, a columnist for the New York Daily News, follows the immigrant experience in American history. What this book impresses on the reader is that throughout the constant change of US history, there has always been a constant immigrant presence in the United States. He also addresses the idea of diversity within Hispanic history and sheds light on a variety of people from many nations. While this book is not solely preoccupied with the Latinos during WWII, Gonzalez does touch on this important aspect of US history.

Gonzales, Manuel G. *Mexicanos: A History of Mexicans in the United States*. New York: Houghton Mifflin, 2005.

Gonzalez has a strong focus on WWII and its aftermath, including the migratory surge to the industrial Midwest and the Pacific Northwest. Gonzales makes an effort to include many lesser-known figures; he also emphasizes the role of Mexicanas. This is a great alternative story of American history.

Meir, Matt and Feliciano Ribera. *Mexican Americans, American Mexicans: From to Conquistadors to Chicanos (American Century Series)*. New York: Harper Collins, 2000.

This is a revised version of the text that was first published in 1972. Overall, the book examines Mexican-American history from the time of the Spanish conquistadors to the Civil Rights movement and recent immigration laws. Within this comprehensive time frame, Meir and Ribera touch on the Latino experience during the 1930s and 1940s.

Novas, Himilce. *Everything You Need to Know About Latino History: 2003 Edition*. New York: Penguin Group, 1998.

Formatted in a question-and-answer format that allows one to look up specific information (e.g., "What Were the Zoot Suit Riots?") or to read straight through, this book is an exciting and interactive reading experience. Generally, Novas' tone is light and at times humorous, written in a conversational, easy to follow style. Also, Novas points readers to further references regarding Latino history. This is a good read for anyone for all audiences looking for an entertaining and informative book.

Stavans, Ilan and Lalo Alcaraz. *Latino USA: A Cartoon History*. New York: Basic Books, 2000.

Ilan Stavans, a literary scholar and cultural historian and Chicano artist Lalo Alcaraz's book will do doubt appeal to both children and adult readers alike. While the book is entertaining and visually exciting, it is also a well-crafted and thorough researched history of Latinos in the United States. The book touches all aspects of Latino/US history, including the 1930s and 1940s. An example of the Latino experience during WWII that Stavans and Alcaraz vividly portray are the Zoot Suit Riots. A strength of this book is its inclusion of many points of view.

Cultural Studies

Rivas-Rodriguez, Maggie. *A Legacy Greater than Words: Stories of US Latinos of the WWII Generation*. Texas: University of Texas Press, 2006.

Rivas-Rodriguez follows the U.S. Latino & Latina WWII Oral History Project at the University of Texas at Austin to compile untold stories of this WWII generation. Altogether, the project videotaped more than five hundred interviews throughout the country and in Puerto Rico and Mexico. In the book are interviews and photographs centered on WWII experiences, including narratives of Latinos who served in segregated "colored" units during the war, as well as stories chronicling the everyday existence of Latinos in the 1930s and 1940s.

Rivas-Rodriguez, Maggie. *Mexican Americans and WWII*. Texas: University of Texas Press, 2005.

This book pulls together eleven essays that explore the Mexican American experience in World War II from a variety of personal and scholarly perspectives in order to bring a new perspective on the “Greatest Generation.” The book also explores how many Mexican Americans viewed WWII as their first true American experience.

Ruiz, Vicki L. *From Out of the Shadows: Mexican Women in Twentieth-Century America*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1999.

Vicki Ruiz’s book is a groundbreaking study of the unique experience of Mexican American women in the United States throughout the 20th century. Relying on personal narratives, interviews, as well as reference materials Ruiz follows personal stories of an entire generation trying to prosper a new land, while simultaneously trying to maintain a unique cultural identity. This marginalized history of Mexican women is a great read to historians and general readers alike. While this book focuses on Mexican women, it is helpful for anyone wanting to understand this community’s role in American history, including WWII.

Sanchez, George J. *Becoming Mexican American: Ethnicity, Culture, and Identity in Chicano Los Angeles, 1900-1945*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993.

Los Angeles in the 20th century is the main focus of a study that deals with Mexican immigrants from 1900 up the WWII era. This historical and cultural study follows the impact of immigration and the changing ethnic make-up of Chicano communities in Los Angeles. Although this is a book of facts, it is an interesting and fresh look on changing American values in the ever-evolving city of Los Angeles.

Vargas, Zaragosa. *Major Problems in Mexican American History: Documents and Essays (Major Problems in American History Series)*. New York: Houghton Mifflin, 2005.

This volume in the Major Problems in American History series spans the broad and complex history of Mexican-Americans from the pre-Columbian era to the present. Although this is sweeping historical overview, the text thoroughly covers Mexican Americans in the Great Depression, Mexican Americans and World War II, as well as Mexican Americans in the Cold War years.