



Recovering History, Constructing Race: The Indian, Black, and White Roots of Mexican Americans (Joe R. and Teresa Lozano Long Series in Latin American ... Latin American and Latino Art and Culture)

Martha Menchaca

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Winner, A Choice Outstanding Academic Book, 2002

The history of Mexican Americans is a history of the intermingling of races—Indian, White, and Black. This racial history underlies a legacy of racial discrimination against Mexican Americans and their Mexican ancestors that stretches from the Spanish conquest to current battles over ending affirmative action and other assistance programs for ethnic minorities. Asserting the centrality of race in Mexican American history, Martha Menchaca here offers the first interpretive racial history of Mexican Americans, focusing on racial foundations and race relations from prehispanic times to the present.

Menchaca uses the concept of racialization to describe the process through which Spanish, Mexican, and U.S. authorities constructed racial status hierarchies that marginalized Mexicans of color and restricted their rights of land ownership. She traces this process from the Spanish colonial period and the introduction of slavery through racial laws affecting Mexican Americans into the late twentieth-century. This re-viewing of familiar history through the lens of race recovers Blacks as important historical actors, links Indians and the mission system in the Southwest to the Mexican American present, and reveals the legal and illegal means by which Mexican Americans lost their land grants.

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