



## José Vasconcelos: The Prophet of Race

*Ilan Stavans*

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# **José Vasconcelos: The Prophet of Race**

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Mexican educator and thinker Jose Vasconcelos is to Latinos what W.E.B. Du Bois is to African Americans--a controversial scholar who fostered an alternative view of the future. In *José Vasconcelos: The Prophet of Race*, his influential 1925 essay, "Mestizaje" key to understanding the role he played in the shaping of multiethnic America--is for the first time showcased and properly analyzed. Freshly translated here by John H. R. Polt, "Mestizaje" suggested that the Brown Race from Latin America was called to dominate the world, a thesis embraced by activists and scholars north and south of the Rio Grande. Ilan Stavans insightfully and comprehensively examines the essay in biographical and historical context, and considers how many in the United States, especially Chicanos during the civil rights era, used it as a platform for their political agenda. The volume also includes Vasconcelos's long-forgotten 1926 Harris Foundation Lecture at the University of Chicago, "The Race Problem in Latin America," where he cautioned the United States that rejecting mestizaje in our own midst will ultimately bankrupt the nation.

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