Steel Barrio: The Great Mexican Migration to South Chicago 1915-1940. Michael Innis-Jimenez. New York: NYU Press. 2013. p/bk 248 pp. ISBN 9780814724651. Price $27.00.

Michael Innis-Jimenez's book *Steel Barrio: The Great Mexican Migration to South Chicago, 1915-1940* is a thorough documentation of the secondary migration of Mexican communities to the industrial Midwest. The book fills in a discernable gap in Mexican and Chicano historiography that exists between the end of the Mexican Revolution and the beginning of the Bracero program in 1942. Compared to the volumes dedicated to Mexicans and Chicanos in the southwest, the secondary migration of Mexicans to the rust belt has been largely a footnote in immigration historiography. Data on housing and segregation for Chicano and Latino communities is thin, particularly for the time period in question. This is in part because neither federal agencies nor the census collected housing data on "hispanics" prior to 1970. Social scientists researching these issues are often forced to extrapolate from the more robust data from African American communities as a proxy because the two racialized groups often shared space within cities. This is what we see in Chicago.

But quantitative research by Nancy Denton and Douglas Massey show that the segregation of African Americans is more intense and consistent in most major cities than any other racialized group. However, much of their data on Chicano or Latino communities doesn't go back nearly far enough to make any definitive claims. Now, in part to thanks to work like Jimenez's, we understand that this gap dates back at least to the 1920s. Thus it confirms that standard understandings of institutional housing discrimination - racial steering, lending, realtors, covenants, zoning - do not always graft onto the experience of Mexican and Chicano communities. But we still lack sufficient qualitative details.

Jimenez breaks his text into three parts: recruitment, resettlement and solidification. His early sections lay out the reasons companies in Chicago sought workers specifically from Mexico and the intricate system they employed to accomplish it. Fact is, they were courted and most of the elaborate recruitment systems that Jimenez itemizes were smashing successes. Jimenez's analysis silences any arguments that the rational and impersonal forces of supply and demand lured Mexican workers

to Chicago. Manufacturing companies were not passive or ambiguous about what they wanted. They bird-dogged people from all over North America because they wanted workers from outside the region to buffer their operations against union militancy. Mexicans resettling in the United States following the devastation of the revolution seemed ideal candidates. Companies like US Steel poached Mexican workers from the railroads, agricultural companies and even their local competitors. They hired from kin networks among migrants themselves, they invested in advertising campaigns throughout the southwest and used labor contractors to recruit workers still in Mexico.

Jimenez uses the remainder of his text to detail how Mexicans carved out a physical and political space amidst segregation. He hits the same note several times throughout that this is not a story of assimilation. Assimilation and similar enclave frameworks are canned ways of lumping all immigration experiences into the same modular narrative. That being, a new immigrant group encounters bigotry from previous groups. Said newcomers persevere until discrimination gives way to acceptance. Such unimaginative notions were not designed to capture the texture and syncretism of Chicago's Mexican Southside. Nor can such contrivances explain the persistence of institutional discrimination. The level of detail Jimenez goes into to prove his point is exceptional. Mexican migrants created what he calls a *third space.* Borrowing the term from David Gutierrez, a professor of history at the University of California San Diego, the term describes a portmanteau of political and cultural defense strategies that Mexican and Chicano communities have used to build community in the United States. Southside was a dynamic, transnational community that had its own mutual aid associations, political advocacy networks, work organizations and churches that brought cohesion and political strength to a young community.

The idea that Mexicans had a politically active community in pre-depression Chicago invalidates many popular assumptions about the political activity of Mexican and Chicano communities. Chicanos and Latinos, for instance are supposedly the "sleeping giant" of electoral politics that could exert enormous influence if ever they were roused from their a-political slumber. They don't vote. They're hard to unionize and rarely agitate for change. None of these were ever true. For example, Jimenez dedicates an entire chapter to how they organized and fought

deportation during the Great Depression. Mexican south-siders went to court, petitioned their consulate for legal assistance, they enlisted the aid of settlement houses and wrote appeals to Spanish language media outlets.

The text's triumphant tone however, at times belies the brutality that is racialized segregation. Douglas Massey and Nancy Denton, two preeminent sociologists of segregation, prove that there is nothing subtle or informal about racial segregation or its economic consequences. The Mexican community in Southside may have thrived but scholars should not minimize the long-term consequences of segregation. The premise of the entire book is that Mexican newcomers were confined to the oldest, most run-down parts of Chicago and that their segregation was motivated by overt racial animus. But Jimenez did not detail the institutional mechanics of segregation - the racial covenants, realtor steering, intimidation, discriminatory lending, physical violence - and their relationships to the community.

Isabel Wilkerson, as a point of comparison, took a different tack in her analysis of the Great Migration. African American segregation was formal and explicit. Their exclusion was written into housing covenants, agents refused to show housing to her interviewees, banks wouldn't lend to them, landlords refused their applications and cities passed ordinances to contain African American families. When formal institutions failed, white communities sometimes resorted to violence. The most obvious evidence of this was the Chicago race riot of 1919. Rioters ransacked and burned the properties of landlords that rented to African Americans. They were not exempt. The absence of any similar analysis in Jimenez's text only raises questions as to how Mexican migrants navigated these institutional barriers.

The book overlooks its most important insight for the field: Mexicans living in south side were not segregated to the same degree as African Americans. This small detail has profound implications for historical understandings of housing discrimination among different racialized groups. Jimenez is uniquely positioned to delineate how the institutional treatment of Mexicans differed from that of their peer migrant group in African Americans, but he never develops it. Jimenez concedes that many of the institutions that named African Americans did not explicitly mandate the segregation of Mexicans to areas of Southside. Pooling data

from Jimenez and Wilkerson, institutions were explicit in regards African Americans but not quite to the same degree for Mexicans.

This is fascinating because it implies that Mexicans were segregated in a more informal manner than African American migrants. The existence of institutional unevenness, no matter how subtle, gives researchers an early data point confirming that the character of housing discrimination between these two groups, though similar, was never interchangeable. Unfortunately, asserting that their experiences were different doesn't tell us much about how Mexicans were treated. The dearth of quantitative or qualitative detail about housing during this period is a major gap in Chicano historiography. Perhaps Jimenez will take up this issue in subsequent work.

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