
How Mexican Race Is Made In America

The United States has always been considered to be a “melting pot,” a nation full of different races, ethnicities, cultures, and beliefs. It has always been a land of opportunity and a place where the “American dream” can come true. No matter how welcoming these perceptions may appear to foreigners, we held and continue to hold prejudices, racism, and a lack of acceptance for anyone different from the standards of what a true American is. Now, more than ever, during the Trump presidency, there has been a heavy focus on immigration policies, especially on those who cross the border illegally to enter the country. As a nation, there is a perceived notion to “protect” citizens and communities from groups that are viewed as illegal, criminal, and diseased. In the book *How Race Is Made in America*, Natalia Molina presents an analysis of the immigration policies in the United States that have criminalized Mexicans for years. Divided into two sections, the first part accentuates the efforts to limit access to citizenship for Mexicans, while the second part assesses ways that them deportable.

Molina substantiates her argument that racial scripts against Mexicans exist by defining where they belong in terms of race and citizenship. The author states that “the U.S. government perpetuated fear of immigrants” by creating programs that targeted them as “radicals, subversives, and communists,” but the Mexicans were able to escape this (Chapter One). However, Roy Garis, a professor at Vanderbilt University and an opponent of Mexican immigration “argued that Mexican immigration is just as threatening,” which caused them to be linked with the discourse of other ethnic groups (Chapter One). This, overall, instilled fear in the general public, which made them less willing to accept a new group of people into society. To them, Mexicans were not accepted as immigrants, but they were only useful as low-wage laborers. Even today, Mexicans are stereotypically viewed as the ones who will do the jobs that people in the U.S. would not stand for. There were also valiant efforts in rendering Mexican immigrants ineligible for citizenship since they occupied an in-between status as they were not a race that could attain citizenship. “The Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo established Mexicans’ eligibility for citizenship,” but it never declared them to be white or even black (Chapter Two). Instead, interest groups strived to categorize Mexicans as Indian-descent. These efforts intensified after the Immigration Act of 1925 and the two Supreme Court decisions, *Ozawa v. the United States* and *the United States v. Bhagat Singh Thind*, which declared Japanese and Asian-Indians ineligible for citizenship because they were not white. Because of the ongoing problem of determining who is considered white, it skewed how Mexicans were viewed.

Molina uses the second part of the book to highlight the methods used to deport Mexicans during this time. A narrative that was most often used was that Mexican immigrants were diseased people, which became the “rhetoric of hatred, fear, and blame against undesirable populations” (Chapter Four). A medical condition made the basis of deportation all the more real, as it was no longer a social construct of race and citizenship but medical reasoning. It was simply a new means of making Mexicans all the more deportable. In the Imperial Valley, for example, The Associated Farmers was a statewide organization that “routinely worked with local law enforcement to maintain control over laborers” (Chapter Four). They worked closely with the Border Patrol, who were issuing deportation warrants for the Mexican agricultural workers who had syphilis, even if they were a long-time resident of the United States. This proves how these patients’ records, which should be private information, were used to identify

them as health threats to deport them. Now, they are continuously seen as diseased, dependent, and deportable individuals.

How Race Is Made in America is very informative of the issues that happened with Mexicans and Mexican-Americans during the 20th century, and it is interesting to see how history repeats itself, given the immigration issues that the United States is dealing with today. The hardships that Mexicans have gone through in the past are reoccurring. For example, children are being forcibly removed from their immigrant parents, which is an incorrect way of handling these kinds of issues. Seeing the terrible treatment of these immigrants today sheds light on how the country has not changed at all in terms of their viewpoint. This book, however, does not solely focus on Mexican immigrants, as it talks a lot about Asian Americans, Native Americans, and other ethnic groups. One of the purposes of How Race Is Made in America is to prove how Mexican immigrants have a narrative that connects to others, but it focuses a lot on that rather than just the story of Mexican immigrants themselves. The discrimination of other ethnic groups is as important, but if the author focused on one group, the message would be more impactful.

The issue of race is not comprised of one moment by one person. It is a collective effort that has multiple meanings attached to its name, and it is the biggest reason why prejudice against others exists. These prejudices may always be prevalent, but so will immigration, as it continues to be the subject of intense national debate to this day. Millions of immigrants find a way to arrive in the United States each year, and it will always affect American life. There needs to be a change in the legal process, even though it is far from being reformed. We cannot continue using racism, privilege, and power to prevent others from creating a better life. As seen, history tends to repeat itself, but we can learn from it.