
Book Review

Sarah D. Wald, David J. Vazquez, Priscilla Solis Ybarra, Sarah Jaquette Ray, Eds., *Latinx Environmentalisms: Place, Justice, and the Decolonial* (Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 2019), 366 pp., \$115.50 (hbk), ISBN: 9781439916674.

We are practitioners and scholars. As we are both daughters of desert lands, we emphasize the slow violence continually committed upon these lands and their inhabitants. These desert borderlands have been seen often as spaces systematically marked for death through acts of colonialism, sexism, and inherent abuse of the land embedded in these paradigms. They have less often been seen as sources for answers and spaces for celebration. Yet both the land and the people of this area continue to thrive because life will always struggle for its existence. As *fronterizas*, we bear witness to those who come for short times to experience conditions never expected within the imposed political boundary of the USA as well as climate refugees who continue to seek conditions not only to survive but thrive. We also know the imminent threat for ourselves of being climate refugees in the next quarter-century. From these places, we read and conversed about *Latinx Environmentalisms*. The methodology for the review is taken from LatinoXa¹ theologies and other liberation theologies, which affirm that practice informs theory as much as theory informs practice.²

Because of the methodology we engaged in this review, this book proved to be the jumping off point which the editors claim in the introduction. For this reason, we recommend reading this book both in smaller sections or individual chapters as well as having conversations with people from various backgrounds around the materials because the power of this text comes not only in the rich chapters which fill its pages, but in the reading and reflection in community. *Latinx Environmentalisms* provides two well-written overview chapters in the 'Introduction' and the 'Afterward'. Chapters 10 and 16 struck the most conversation between us.

Chapter 10, 'Between Water and Song: Maria Melendez and the Contours of Contemporary Latinx Eco-poetry' by Randy Ontiveros, brought forth visceral feelings of cultivating food in this desert region,³ feeling the threat of ecological col-

1. Term coined in Cruz, De Anda, and Medina (2013: 5).

2. The authors of the review have engaged it as an ecological engagement where eco is understood as a derivation of the Greek *oikos*, meaning an extended family and logic from *logos* or word. The two together assume both the engagement of written words, which are enlivened because of our interaction with one another as reviewers and friends.

3. This knowledge is specifically attributed to Cristina's labor in what is broadly known as New Mexico and Far West Texas. It is an acknowledgment to the many who go unnamed while their labor nourishes and sustains us all.

lapse, and continuing to move forward without succumbing to apathy or fatalism. The notion of La Llorona crying by the river resonates as we witness the slow violence of climate change—the river is dry most of the year now—and read this in grief, mourning, and yet still hope. The chapter also marked for us the ongoing struggles with institutional gatekeepers while being knowledge-creators in our own realms.

Cherrie Moraga's wisdom reverberates in chapter 16 'The Body Knows and the Land Has Memory' by Priscilla Solis Ybarra. The notion of thinking, 'You are my land not you are my environment' highlights the interconnection between life, land, and language that exists for many Chicana communities. The notion that 'the body knows' highlights the gift of knowledge creation which comes from within one's own body and how this has been central to Chicana scholarship, as can be seen in the following example:

You just can't have a relationship to nature that thrives on privatization. It just won't work...Injustices started when we began to lose our relationship with nature and treat it just as a resource to be commodified. And with the ownership of land came the ownership of women, since the earliest notions of property. (p. 286)

Privatization, separation, and the commodification of land and labor dismiss bodily wisdom, sensory knowledge, ecological knowledge, and limitations. Land workers, climate refugees, and essential workers know in their bodies the threats from systems that operate as if boundaries don't exist, and exploitation is boundless.

Regarding specific audiences, *Latinx Environmentalisms* is well-suited for undergraduates as well as community groups. The breadth of the volume portrays the distinction between disciplinary methodologies through each of the chapters. They exemplify the complexity of working in the area of Latinx Studies across previously set academic disciplines.

Recognizing the meticulous work done by each author and the editorial team, some questions and concerns arise with this volume. For example, the editors claim that the volume is more Chicana based than Latinx-based. Why is Chicana not included as part of the title rather than claiming a broader Latinx umbrella only? Also, recognizing this volume appeared in 2019, the urgency and necessity to attend to the challenges to the broader Latinx diaspora where colorism and racism are examined has been made clear by the COVID-19 global pandemic and international protests for racial justice. Another volume might be necessary which attends more to the broader Latinx diaspora where colorism, racism, classism, and heteropatriarchal sexism are more overtly attended, and should include more emphasis on the notions of both agriculture and essential workers.

On a more critical note, it is important to pay attention to the many years of justice work done by groups like the AFL-CIO and the Dolores Huerta Foundation, where the topics of environmental concerns, labor injustice, and sexism have been intertwined for decades. There is an urgency to the work of attending to how and where people are able to live on this planet. This urgency is not overt in this text. Practitioners spend time simultaneously grappling with how to attain life-sustaining results while working to use language that is reflective of naming, shifting, and coalescing power. Naming, titling, and accepting cultural conceptualizations within communities holds power. Yet, too much attention paid to defining

environmentalism and acceptable criteria can obfuscate the ecological⁴ urgency needed today. Scholars have much to learn from practitioners in this area, which is not only a criticism of this volume. Beyond reading *Latinx Environmentalisms*, for those looking for work which engages some of the missing topics mentioned above as well as the topic of religion, we recommend articles written by J. Hidalgo and C. Nanko-Fernández.

References

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4. We see 'ecological' as introduced in the second paragraph. Because interwoven systems of colonization, sexism, racism, etc., have abused the land and its inhabitants, they have created false webs of privatization and separation. Therefore, justice, as acts of building better relationships, comes through ecological webs.