



The Latino Threat: Constructing Immigrants, Citizens, and the Nation

By Leo R. Chavez

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From volunteers ready to patrol the U.S.-Mexico border to the hundreds of thousands of men, women, and children who have marched in support of immigrant rights, the United States has witnessed a surge of involvement in immigration activism. In *The Latino Threat*, Leo R. Chavez critically investigates the media stories about and recent experiences of immigrants to show how prejudices and stereotypes have been used to malign an entire immigrant population—and to define what it means to be an American.

Pundits—and the media at large—nurture and perpetuate the notion that Latinos, particularly Mexicans, are an invading force bent on reconquering land once considered their own. Through a perceived refusal to learn English and an "out of control" birthrate, many say that Latinos are destroying the American way of life. But Chavez questions these assumptions and offers facts to counter the myth that Latinos are a threat to the security and prosperity of our nation.

His breakdown of the "Latino threat" contests this myth's basic tenets, challenging such well-known authors as Samuel Huntington, Pat Buchanan, and Peter Brimelow. Chavez concludes that citizenship is not just about legal definitions, but about participation in society. Deeply resonant in today's atmosphere of exclusion, Chavez's insights offer an alternative and optimistic view of the vitality and future of our country.

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Editorial Review

Review

"*The Latino Threat* represents cultural studies at its best . . . [T]he topic is timely, the synthetic approach is masterfully executed and the writing is lucid and accessible. I would recommend the book for undergraduate or postgraduate courses on the politics of immigration, ethnicity or media."—David Scott FitzGerald, *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*

"Chavez accomplishes a thorough, complex, wide-ranging, sophisticated and truly interdisciplinary read of this narrative, which balances the best of race and gender scholarship."—Arturo J. Aldama, *Camino Real*

"This book offers the reader a deep and compelling assessment of what 21st century geopolitics has in store for a country with an immigrant past, present and future by addressing the issue of the Latino experience in the United States the author uncovers and carefully dissects the past immigrant narrative that produced the myth of the American Dream and American ingenuity while assessing what the current state of Latino immigration means for America."—Barbara Robles, *Journal of Sociology and Social Welfare*

"Through a careful analysis of media spectacles and public discourse, Chavez interrogates and challenges the Latino Threat Narrative—the idea that Latinos are incapable of integration and are taking over and changing America. Chavez equally offers us a thoughtful analysis of conflicts over the meaning of citizenship in an increasingly globalized world. In an era of debate over immigration reform, this book is essential reading for scholars, policy makers, and a thoughtful public alike." —Caroline B. Brettell, Southern Methodist University

"In this tour de force volume, Leo Chavez offers a penetrating analysis of how Latinos have been socially constructed as a threat to the American nation by bigoted political actors for their own cynical purposes and draws expertly on logic, facts, and reason to expose the mythical threat for the intellectual fraud and moral travesty that it truly is."—Douglas S. Massey, Princeton University

"This is the most systematic examination available of the whys and whats behind the representation of Latinos as a threat. Chavez digs deeply into the history, politics, economics, and social psychology of this false representation frequently activated by the media. A key issue for Chavez is the connection between the "threat" and the crisis in the meaning of citizenship, at a time when cross-border mobilities multiply and rich foreign firms and professionals receive better economic protections than many poorer national firms and workers." —Saskia Sassen, Columbia University, author of *Territory, Authority, Rights*

About the Author

Leo R. Chavez is Professor of Anthropology at the University of California, Irvine. His publications include *Shadowed Lives: Undocumented Immigrants in American Society* (1998) and *Covering Immigration: Popular Images and the Politics of the Nation* (2001).

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