

Review of ¡Marcha! Latino Chicago and the Immigrant Rights Movement

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¡Marcha! Latino Chicago and the Immigrant Rights Movement.

By Amalia Pallares and Nilda Flores-González (editors) (2010)

Illinois: University of Illinois University Press, 279 pp.

¡Marcha! begins by offering a political and historical context and is organized around three key themes: institutions, agency, and subjectivities. Chapters on institutions look at churches, schools, and trade unions from which many of the mobilizations took shape. The section on agency explores ways in which migrants and Latinos negotiated their mobilizations both within their own organizations as well as with those institutions (e.g. schools) whose permission they needed to join the marches. The third section, subjectivities, looks at the ways in which subjective positions influenced the decision to join the mobilizations while positions were being shaped by the process of participating in the demonstrations.

A key conclusion that can be drawn from the chapters included in *¡Marcha!* is that the 2006 mobilizations were not spontaneous. Rather, they were the consequence of years of initiatives taken by a diverse array of individuals and organizations at different scales. To ignore this would mean to subscribe to simplistic interpretations which frequently represent migrant mobilization as the “awakening of the sleeping giant,” as if such mobilizations occurred in a political vacuum.

Nor can these impressive mobilizations be interpreted as a guarantee of comprehensive immigration reform in the United States. Recent changes in Arizona’s legislation and similar pending initiatives in other states confirm that, despite migrant organization, stricter migration policies are likely to develop in the years to come. The current global economic crisis, which has been particularly damaging in the United States, makes reformist policies even more difficult.

The hardening of immigration policies has brought about what another recent edited book calls “the deportation regime” (De Genova, 2010). A reading in parallel of these two edited collections greatly illustrates how an increase in regulation expresses itself through migration policies, portraying migrants as criminalized and deportable subjects. The politicization of migration therefore, means both the

recognition of tougher policies and the strength of migrants as collective subjects (e.g. actors, projects, scales) emerging from both within the migrant rights movement and beyond it.

This tension between potential avenues for political intervention and political limits demands a careful reading. To ignore the deepening of right-wing views on migration does not allow an identification of the terrain in which political initiatives are going to take place. Yet, to recognize only the repressive policies without any attempt to think of the political potential of migrants at different scales (local, national, and transnational) would have a demobilizing effect.

Rather than taking a fixed view of this tension, *¡Marcha!* makes a very important contribution, reflecting on the routes, actors, agendas, contradictions, and subjectivities from the location of a global city such as Chicago. In times when the term de-territorialization can denote loosely-grounded empirical research, this edited book reminds us that it is possible to articulate questions which have international repercussions while staying connected to the locality. In the case of this volume on immigrant rights movements, the locality is Chicago, and all contributors to this volume are affiliated with institutions in that city (University of Illinois at Chicago and DePaul University).

¡Marcha! would be of most interest to those working in Latino Studies, Immigration Studies, and Community Studies. A translation to Spanish, making this recent history available to those working for migrant rights in Latin America, would be a welcome next step.

Reference

De Genova, N. & Peutz, N. (2010). *The deportation regime: Sovereignty, space, and the freedom of movement*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.