

*The Nature of the Future* is brilliantly conceptualized, convincingly argued, and beautifully written, with engaging and often witty prose. The breadth and depth of the research is impressive; Pawley skillfully synthesizes extensive archival material with careful readings of agricultural journals, scientific publications in botany, horticulture, and chemistry, and literary texts like Thoreau's *Walden*. Indeed, throughout the book, Pawley emphasizes the centrality of print culture and institutional networks that produced and circulated ideas about improvement. Readers will discover an important idea and a fascinating detail on every page of this remarkable book. *The Nature of the Future* is essential reading for historians of capitalism, science, agriculture, and environment, as well as nineteenth-century Americanists and a wider audience interested in how food systems have been historically connected to improving visions of multiple futures—many of which have not come to pass—and how we might understand the market logics and speculative visions of twenty-first-century agriculture during a period of climate crisis and its attendant economic and environmental transformations.

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Ethnic Entrepreneurs, Crony Capitalism, and the Making of the Franco-Mexican Elite. By José Galindo. Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2021. xvi + 222 pp. Illustrations, notes, bibliography, index. Cloth, \$54.95. ISBN: 978-0-8173-2080-5.

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Reviewed by William Suárez-Potts

In *Ethnic Entrepreneurs, Crony Capitalism, and the Making of the Franco-Mexican Elite*, José Galindo has written a history of the Jean family, who began to immigrate to Mexico from France in the late nineteenth century. Family members quickly established themselves in commerce, the cotton textile industry, banking, and, eventually, real estate, in part through networks that they cultivated, both with other businessmen and with government officials. The Jeans thereby became associated with the Mexican elite that lived and sometimes suffered or profited during the decade of revolutionary civil war (1910–1920), and the ensuing, turbulent 1920s and 1930s. Ultimately, they shifted business activities but have remained in the nation's upper and upper middle classes. Galindo has thus written a social history of an

entrepreneurial family, which, not incidentally, covers the period of time during which industrial capitalism became ascendant in Mexico and generated a strong reaction: the Mexican Revolution. This series of conflicts led to new accommodations between business and political leaders, who either volitionally or out of necessity began to calculate their survival (or fortune) with reference to new social movements as well as in relation to the viability of specific enterprises and the economy as a whole. Galindo's study is, of course, specific to Mexico's path of modernization, but the themes that it addresses concern wide facets of the evolution of business and capitalism since the late nineteenth century; pointedly, he examines how entrepreneurs, through networks among themselves (and with the assistance of state officials), have promoted and protected their enterprises, in arrangements that have sometimes been denounced as corrupt.

The author actually devotes much of his monograph to the issue of corruption, which he defines, in view of his focus on business activity, essentially as the appropriation of public resources by government officials, in collusion with elements of the private sector (see pp. 7–8). For Galindo, the appropriation need not be in violation of law, and although his conceptualization of “collusive corruption” is intended to be broader than some approaches that center narrowly on crony capitalism, he too is focused on this phenomenon (see p. 8). Two chapters of the five-chapter book deal with the interface of business with government that is frequently deemed as corrupt: one covers Mexico's formative period for capitalism and the state in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries; the other narrates developments since the 1980s until the near present. Both chapters are well grounded in relevant scholarship and could largely stand independently from the rest of the book. Galindo draws from a variety of sources, including contemporary journalistic commentary, in an effort both to balance their respective contributions and to undergird the argument that guides his examination of the Jean family. Put simply, he contends that close ties within and among family businesses, along with their connections with government officials, served to counter the inherent weakness of state institutions in early phases of industrialization—but subsequently, in postrevolutionary decades, the same practices of collusion have operated to deflect effective institutionalization that would have resulted in a more efficient and equitable economy. Or, in Galindo's words, “crony capitalism was fundamental and necessary for the development of capitalist economies. . . including Mexico's economy” (p. 14). “However,” he adds, “having previously solved institutional weaknesses, crony capitalism deeply limited the construction and evolution of formal institutions, including that of a robust legal system, keeping them weak and sequestered to the

benefit of a few individuals in the medium to long term (to the present day)" (pp. 148–49). This is certainly a plausible argument and one that is relevant to understanding the course of the Jean family.

To demonstrate how the Jean family became a constituent element of Mexico's wealthy business class, Galindo relies on interviews (including with the Jeans), archival records of notaries, and data derived therefrom that he processed with UCINET, software used for social network analysis. The software enables the user to identify and quantify points of contact that each network member shares, thereby demonstrating the strategic centrality of some network members. The calculus, for Galindo, confirmed the significance of the family network with that of other French immigrants who shared the same provincial background, the region of Barcelonnette in southeastern France, near the Alps (hence the common name for these immigrants, the "Barcelonnettes"). But Galindo also distinguishes the Jeans from other Barcelonnettes: they arrived later to Mexico, maintained their businesses as close family enterprises, and branched successfully into banking, arguably, according to Galindo, thereby gaining more leverage in economic society (see chap. 3 and pp. 99, 119–20).

Moreover, the Jean family successfully diversified out of cotton textile manufacturing as it became less profitable in the face of rival technological advances and strong, state-supported union demands for job-conserving collective bargaining agreements. More than other Franco-Mexicans, the Jeans undertook real estate development projects in Mexico City, which implies collusion with politicians, while involving themselves in French cultural institutions that appealed to bourgeois Mexicans. This eased further networking and a fortuitous alliance with the Azcárraga family, the latter soon dominating television media in Mexico. Again, the implication is collaboration with the nation's long-dominant political party, the PRI (Partido Revolucionario Institucional).

The PRI may be in secular decline since the victory of its political nemesis, left-leaning president Andrés Manuel López Obrador, in 2018. López Obrador campaigned on an anticorruption platform and since then has insisted on redressing Mexico's political culture. But in the book's concluding chapters that recount recent business and political history Galindo remains skeptical about a transformation of practices, owing to the persistence of historical patterns of collusion (pp. 163–64). He may be correct to a degree: his monograph points to institutional arrangements that do not altogether impede opportunities for rewarding collaboration between government and still powerful family and business networks. It is a conclusion apposite to the present, and while it is unlikely that this book could become the definitive work regarding its stated themes, Galindo has made an important contribution to the

business history of modern Mexico. Indeed, it should be of interest to scholars comparatively studying twentieth-century capitalism.

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*Madam C. J. Walker's Gospel of Giving: Black Women's Philanthropy during Jim Crow.* By Tyrone McKinley Freeman. Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 2020. xvi + 278 pp. Photographs, notes, bibliography, index. Cloth, \$110.00. ISBN: 978-0-252-04345-1.

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Reviewed by Marybeth Gasman

Madam C. J. Walker, born Sarah Breedlove in 1867, is best known for founding a beauty empire focused mainly on Black women's hair. Walker was a businesswoman, an entrepreneur, a philanthropist, and self-made in the truest sense given that she was the daughter of enslaved Black people, orphaned when her parents died, and a child laborer.

In the words of Tyrone Freeman, author of *Madam C. J. Walker's Gospel of Giving*, Walker dedicated her life to giving Black people—especially Black women—what slavery and Jim Crow stole from them. She vowed to make something of her life that would allow her to give back, eventually becoming a prominent philanthropist to Black communities and beyond. Freeman's stated purpose in writing the book was to offer a glimpse into the philanthropic and spiritual life of this powerhouse of a businesswoman, thereby helping us to understand her motives.

Although Walker is primarily known for her business acumen, Freeman focuses the book on her giving and philanthropy, which she developed over the course of her life. He delves into the influence of the Black Church as well as the mentorship she received from Black women professionals who were active in the church. Freeman's argument is that because Walker's role as a businesswoman has been researched and examined first and foremost, her role as a philanthropist has been relegated to the realm of anecdotes rather than subject to rich exploration. He admits that Walker was known for making philanthropic donations—most notably her \$1,000 gift to the “colored” YMCA of Indianapolis—but scholars, even those studying philanthropy, and African American philanthropy in particular, have not examined her philanthropic giving in full. Moreover, Walker's motivations for giving have only been touched upon by