Book Reviews

Darius V. Echeverría. *Aztlán Arizona: Mexican American Educational Empowerment, 1968–1978.* Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2014. 200 pp.

In 2010, two pieces of legislation instigated a rise in community protest and youth activism in Arizona and throughout the nation. Arizona House Bill 2281 banned ethnic studies courses, such as the successful program taught in the Tucson Unified School District, while Arizona Senate Bill 1070 allowed local authorities to question residents' citizenship. In Aztlán, Arizona, Echeverría explicates how these policies continue a legacy of injustice and racial inequality in Arizona and, at the same time, how the protests and activism in response to these policies continue another legacy of "Arizonan-Mexican" collectivism and community action. Echeverría reexamines previous contentions that racial discrimination in Arizona "appears to be somewhat less than in other parts of the Southwest" and posits that "'Arizonan-Mexicans' orchestrated their own Chicano Movement, illustrated principally through educational agency that was the product of social, political, cultural, and historical inequalities" (p. 5). Echeverría successfully supports this assertion through two areas of inquiry: first, K–12 public schools in the Phoenix and Tucson metropolitan areas and, second, campuses of higher education, including the University of Arizona and Arizona State University.

The opening chapter of *Aztlán Arizona* grounds the rest of the book with a brief social history of Arizona prior to the 1960s. Echeverría then shifts his focus to highlight the vast disparities in equal educational opportunities and the persistence of racial segregation in Pima and Maricopa Counties. As was the case throughout much of the Southwest, public schools in Arizona employed a variety of mechanisms to racially segregate its Arizonan Mexican students. School boundaries and housing patterns explained why "segregation was the rule rather than the exception, a dynamic that existed as late as the 1960s" (p. 14). Yet school districts also justified segregating Arizonan Mexican students by claiming they entered with linguistic and cultural deficits, requiring institutions that could meet their specific needs. Language and culture indeed functioned as categorical barriers between Arizonan Mexicans and white Arizonans. According to Echeverría, public schools functioned to "eradicate culture, social relations, and a sense of racial heritage," as faculty severely punished those

"caught speaking Spanish," while the curriculum "often excluded or devalued the cultural contributions of ethnic Mexican history" (p. 29–30). Arizonan Mexican students received an education that prepared them for their place in the economy through English-only, vocationally oriented programs of instruction. Furthermore, schools throughout the state habitually directed Arizonan Mexican students into remedial or nonacademic courses. "Arizonan-Mexicans," Echeverría explained, "were generally doomed for low-income jobs with little room for advancement and were therefore mired in financial desolation" (p. 41).

Chicano communities in nearby states such as Colorado, California, and Texas faced similar challenges. A collective call to action to combat the inequality of educational opportunity began to spread across the region. Activists rallied for a more culturally relevant curriculum and bilingual programs. They did not always view segregation as the problem so much as the indoctrination of their children into a culture that viewed them as second-class citizens. Echeverría warrants a similar claim that Arizonan Mexicans wanted nothing to do with school integration, but rather desired better schools and a better education, thereby working to create schools that empowered its students and honored their culture. Chicano activists throughout the Southwest believed integrated schools would not benefit their community; instead, they promoted a platform based on bilingual education, local school control, and a curriculum based on the Chicano culture. Community leaders sought sweeping changes to existing programs of instruction and organized protests that led Phoenix schools to ultimately offer specialty ethnic studies courses. Likewise, the persistence of unequal opportunities led many Arizonan Mexican leaders to campaign for schools to be opened in local barrios specifically for Arizonan Mexican students. While this separatist movement did not swell and "education reform in cities such as Tucson and Phoenix were modest, the change ushered in served to inspire students throughout Arizona to press their case for academic reclamation" (p. 64). It is here that Echeverría excels in his ability to both illustrate the unique qualities of the Chicano movement in Arizona and to highlight experiences common to the broader movement.

Chapters 4 and 5 shift the analysis from community engagement at the K–12 level to student activism on college campuses. Although a somewhat swift transition, Echeverría links the struggle for equal educational opportunities in public schools to the student movements taking place on university campuses. As civil rights legislation passed in the 1960s ushered in political activism within the Arizonan Mexican community, the University of Arizona and Arizona State University became hotbeds of protest. Echeverría contends, "As a powerful,

unifying force, Chicano students in colleges and universities alike became politicized, mobilizing into coalitions in order to protect discrimination against all Arizonan-Mexicans in every level of education" (p. 68). Chicano activism on university campuses in Arizona raised awareness about a myriad of social injustices, including local workers' rights, fair housing, and local scholarship programs to support student access and retention. Ultimately, Echeverría concludes, "Through confrontation, negotiation, and political alliances, Arizonan-Mexican college students created public spaces, influenced the terms of exchange, and paved the way for social accommodations in an educational environment that previously negated their existence" (pp. 105–106).

These two chapters provide well-substantiated claims and thorough analysis concerning various student coalitions and organizations. Collectively, both chapters offer new and important insight into an often-overlooked theater of the Chicano movement: college campuses in the state of Arizona. Although this section of the book is well written and concise, the narrative deviates from the social and cultural analysis that worked in earlier chapters, choosing instead to emphasize the details behind the rise of many student organizations with, at times, differing objectives. Last, the pithiness of the text offers a clear, detailed account of the Chicano movement in Arizona; still, it would have been interesting to learn more about the intersections and divergences with other cultural movements coinciding with the Chicano movement.

Aztlán Arizona concludes nicely by weaving contemporary political unrest and social activism with those who rallied for equal educational opportunities in the 1960s and 1970s. Echeverría proclaims, "From Tucson to Tempe, students touched by Chicano agency realized that their education was not simply theirs as an individual, but that they owed something to the communities from which they had come" (p. 118). With legislation such as HB 2281 and SB 1070, "Half a century later, Arizonan-Mexicans are still striving to hold educational leaders accountable for a variety of concerns, but none greater than a stark ethnic Mexican high school dropout rate and maintaining a Mexican American program of study" (p. 107). As such, Echeverría's *Aztlán Arizona* is both timely and needed.

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