



Ethnic Labels, Latino Lives: Identity and the Politics of (Re)Presentation in the United States

Suzanne Oboler

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Suzanne Oboler is a well-respected Latino studies professor at Brown University. In this book, she interviews immigrants from Latin America and asks if they identify as Latino and see themselves as having anything in common with other Latinos, those outside of their national origin group. Basically, she asks Latin Americans in the US themselves whether they accept this country's racial categorizations. What she finds is that working-class Latinos merely look at others as fellow Spanish-speakers and shrug US racial classifications off (though not in a hostile way) whereas Latin Americans from middle-class backgrounds were quite aware that the minority label opened access to affirmative action programs and other tangible benefits and thus embraced the label. This conclusion seems counterintuitive and is fascinating. Oboler grounds her discussion by talking of Puerto Rican and Chicano activism in this country. Even though she is of Peruvian descent, she is knowledgeable about the more populous Latino groups. This text is well-respected among ethnic studies scholars. Anyone interested in books on Latinos and Latinas in the US must obtain a copy of Oboler's work.

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