

Analytical review of from out of the shadows history essay



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From Out of the Shadows is a study of Mexican women, who had migrated to America before the World Wars, their struggles and achievements. Vicki L. Ruiz is a professor of History and Chicano/Latino studies, University of California and has authored a number of books including the well known book Cannery Women, Cannery Lives. Vicki L. Ruiz exposes the strife the Mexican women had to face after crossing the border early in the century. The book tells us about the endeavors of these courageous and enterprising women and the society they helped to build in an alien land, quite often under hostile conditions. In her book she writes "From Out of the Shadows focuses on the claiming of personal and public spaces across generations" (Ruiz, xi). Ruiz was motivated to chronicle this aspect of American history by the stories she heard as a child from her mother and grand-mother. Her imagination was kindled by the images of village life, the difficult living conditions and the discrimination women faced in those days.

From Out of the Shadows also emphasizes the different types of political activism in which the Mexican-American women participated and created public awareness, which included fighting for the cause of civil rights and organized protests against the Vietnam War. For a newer edition of this book, Ruiz has added a preface that carries on the story of the Mexican women's experience in America and traces the growth of Latino history.

The book describes the first exodus of women crossing the border from Mexico to California seeking refuge from tyrannical husbands or in search of a better life earlier on in the century. Over one million Mexican men and women migrated "al otro lado" between 1910 and 1930 (Ruiz: 6) Ruiz throws light on the effort made by protestant groups in an attempt to "

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Americanize” the Mexicans but whose efforts generally failed because the Mexican women relied on their own community groups like the rural community groups, religious groups and labor unions to help them absorb into mainstream American society.

The book talks about the conflict that arose between mothers and daughters when the daughters were forbidden to use makeup and the mothers insisted that teenage girls attend a dance or go for social outings like movies with a chaperone. What this book reveals is a portrayal of a distinct culture in America, one that has slowly gained momentum and richness in the past several years. *From Out of the Shadows* is a significant contribution to the largely unrecorded and undocumented history of Mexican-American women. She has chosen to integrate the cultural diversity based on gender, class, region and generational experiences. She has used a variety of sources in her research such as records of census, journals and scholarly texts.

In the introduction, Ruiz tells her readers that Mexican women have made history, no matter what their occupations. However, somehow their tales have “remained in the shadows” (Ruiz xi). In her work, Ruiz has tried to address the issues of interpreting these unheard voices and defining strength within individuals, families and communities. Conventionally the history of America has focused on the Northern European immigrants and their progeny as the settlers in a male dominated, capitalist society. In her writing, Ruiz demonstrates the hardships the Mexican women faced in their journey to become a part of the American community.

Ruiz draws upon the lives of women, their dreams, aspirations and decisions and gives these issues a platform. She examines the influx of Mexican women into the States before World War II. Her writing also illustrates their responses to the pressures and challenges of adjusting to the newly forming American culture and Americanization of society in general. The women had to live with altered social values during the inter-war period and the end of young Mexican American women who took to chaperoning. The increasing political and social activism of Mexican women and their role in resisting financial oppression as well as their espousal of the cause of feminism through the 1960s and 70s has been faithfully chronicled in the pages of this book.

As yet not much has been documented and published about the activities and importance of Mexican women in twentieth century America. In that perspective this book may be considered as a pioneering attempt to record the contribution of Mexican women in building a multicultural American society. The book is full of interesting anecdotes and tales of how the women struggled to make sense of an alien world, into which they had migrated, and of their efforts to make their lives and of those around them meaningful. The thoughtful way in which personal interviews of Mexican women with very long memories and lots of stories to tell, adds poignancy to the text. The narrative increases the readers' admiration for the courage and doggedness displayed by these women in their struggle to realize their rights and for a chance to get equal opportunities, work and wages.

To present an unbiased analysis of the book one must draw attention

towards some of the draw backs in the book as well. While this is a <https://assignbuster.com/analytical-review-of-from-out-of-the-shadows-history-essay/>

monumental effort to chronicle the contribution of Mexican women and the integration of Latino people to the American society it becomes hard to comprehend the frequent use of jargon that impacts the flow of the narrative. In portions the author becomes too involved in the account and loses sense objectivity and neutral research. Ruiz, however, admits that she has written “ from the heart” (p. xii) and this kind of impassioned approach may appeal to a good many of her readers. Readers looking at this book as a traditional source of historical data may find this approach subjective and a bit unconventional. It must be emphasized here that the data collected and recorded in this book is of great importance to students of American history and to all those generations of Mexican-American people who have now become assimilated in the multicultural American society.

The book will find a ready readership amongst scholars in who are taking courses or researching in the areas of Diaspora, immigration and ethnic studies. It is also an asset for teachers who have to teach courses in this field. This book is of special interest to women all over the world and to anyone who wishes to learn about the Mexican settlers in America and the contribution Mexican-American women have made to the development, organization and sustenance of Latino culture in the American society. Through the pages of this book Vicki Ruiz has truly rescued the Mexican-American woman and drawn them From Out of the Shadows.

Work Cited:

Ruiz, V. L. 2008. From Out of the Shadows: Mexican Women in Twentieth Century America. New York: Oxford University Press. Print.

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