



Latino Sun, Rising: Our Spanish-Speaking U.S. World

Marco Portales

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Now that Latinos are the most numerous ethnic minority in the United States and a growing part of the middle and professional classes, a Mexican American educator takes stock. Latinos can see that their sun is rising. Marco Portales knows; his life has been lived under that rising sun.

On the beach at Corpus Christi, in class at SUNY-Buffalo, waiting tables in Chicago, traveling to London, teaching at Berkeley, raising a family near NASA headquarters in Houston—Portales gives readers a view of the private world and public significance of Latinos. By vividly recreating his parents' generation as well as his own, Marco Portales encourages readers to consider Latino progress since the days of his happy youth during the Eisenhower fifties, years that coalesced into the gradual but steady unfurling of his ethnic consciousness.

Working within a traditional Aztec framework of “suns” or days, Portales looks through the window of individual life onto the “morning” (*sol naciente*) of growing up as a minority member of American society, the “noontime” (*sol ardiente*) of private adult life and the transmission of identity to a new generation, and the full heat of afternoon (*sol radiante*), when public business is done and the larger polity is addressed.

In the compelling details of a life truly lived—and a balanced, lively intellect that articulates itself in a society that often asks people such as him to choose between their American and Mexican identities—Portales inscribes himself into his people's experience. At the same time, he remains fully aware—and helps raise our awareness—that no one person's story can embody and represent the ancestral histories and the great worth and potential of all U.S. Latinos.

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