

Cecilia Marquez Edit 2

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Gerry: Hi, my name is Geraldo Cadava and welcome to season two of Writing Latinos, a podcast from Public Books. We're back for more conversations with Latino authors writing about the wide world of Latinidad. As always, some of our episodes are nerdy and academic, while others are playful and light hearted. All offer thoughtful reflections on Latino identity and how writing conveys some of its meanings.

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Thank you everyone for tuning in to listen to Writing Latinos. We are delighted and lucky to have Cecilia Marquez with us today. She is the author of a new book called Making the Latino South, A History of Racial Formation. She is also the Hunt Family Assistant Professor of History at Duke University.

Cecilia: Well, thanks so much for having me. I'm really excited to get to talk about the book today.

Gerry: I don't know how closely listeners tune into these kinds of academic trends. But there is a kind of mini boom of scholarship on Latinos in the U. S. South and the history of Latinos in the U. S. South. And, uh, you know, these are all names, you know, but I'm thinking of Julie Wise and Perla Guerrero and Mike Ines Jimenez and others and Sarah McNamara.

Um, We have your wonderful book and I'm wondering if you could just tell us a little bit about how you settled on your topic of writing about Latinos in the South.

Cecilia: So my project started my junior year of college at Swarthmore College, which is a small liberal arts school right outside of Philly, and, um, one of my professors, uh, took me and a group of students down to Shaw University, which is the HBCU in Raleigh, currently only about 20 minutes away from where I live.

where the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee, also known as SNCC, which was a youth led vanguard movement of the Civil Rights Movement in the 1960s, they were holding a 50th anniversary conference. And so I was taking a Women in the Civil Rights Movement class and we were learning about SNCC activists and we went to this conference going to get to interview folks.

So for people who know things about SNCC I got to talk to like Frances Beal and Judy Richardson and Ruby Sales and Interview all of these amazing women. Yeah. We were sort of doing these interviews and on the last day, this man walks by and his name is Luis Zapata. And so I'm like, all right, I'm going to just do some quick racial profiling and assume that you might be Latino and chased him out the, out of the room we were in, and then I...

So were you involved in SNCC? And he ended up being a Chicano organizer with the United Farm Workers who had come to SNCC, um, to organize with the Mississippi Freedom Labor Union and the Delta in the 1960s. And from there, he was, um, also from Northern Virginia. and that area. And so we ended up talking several times and I went to graduate school really planning to work on Latino organizing in the civil rights movement.

And that's a big part of this bug as it exists now, but it isn't the whole book. But I think the real, you know, the SNCC conference was part of the origin story, but some of it certainly comes just from my like training and Black studies at Swarthmore and that kind of intellectual, um, legacy. I mean, it was, it was activists and SNCC and stories of the Black freedom struggle that really taught me about race in the south. And so then when I meet someone like Luis Zapata, who isn't in those stories, who isn't, um, part of that narrative that I had learned, I was like, how do I retell these stories, um, while including Latinos?

How do I rethink about something like the civil rights movement with the story of Latinos included?

Gerry: I think it's fascinating that your book on Latinos in the south. actually really started through your engagement with Black Studies and kind of coming across the SNCC chapter in North Carolina that you started looking into.

And I know that's important to you because a lot of your book, you know, it's about racial formation, but racial formation in Relation to African Americans in the South and Black people in the South in particular. But I really felt like your book was trying to make an argument about how Latino identity is always forged in relation to these other categories and in particular, uh, Black identity in the South.

A lot of people have liked to say over the past 10, 20 years that Latinos trouble the Black, white racial binary. I remember, you know, when people first started making the argument for the importance of looking at Latinos in the South, why, why study Latinos in the South? Oh, because they trouble the Black, white racial binary.

And you are, I guess, trying to trouble the idea that Latinos trouble the Black, white racial binary. And in ways that I haven't really seen a lot of scholars do before. I've talked with Afro Latino scholars and Afro Latinas who've said that no, you know, Latinos really reinforce the Black white binary.

There are Black Latinos and there are white Latinos, but instead what you say is the critical differences between Black and non Black. It's not necessarily Black versus white, but it's Black versus non Black. And I wonder if you could walk us through, um, why that distinction matters.

Cecilia: Yeah, no, that's a great question.

I mean, and, and the book starts in 1940 and it ends in 2010. So when I'm looking in 1940, I mean, this is really, You know, Jim Crow is a sort of solidified system in the South. And, and part of the reason I find the South so helpful as a place to look at questions about race and racial formation is this is a place where people had to make a lot of racial choices every single day.

And so when you have families like the Enriquez family is one that I opened the book with, um, they're a family that lived in San Antonio, Texas. Uh, in the 1950s, they hear word from relatives that there's better money and a better life in Mississippi, which might surprise some people when you think about Mississippi of the 1950s.

And they move there and they end up finding that they can get better pay and work. They're able to live, um, they're able to attend white schools, they're able to live in neighborhoods that are mixed. They're able to do things that they couldn't do in San Antonio, Texas. And so part of what I was trying to understand is, you know, they tell this story about when they get there, they would go to use the colored entrance.

And both Black and white patrons say, no, no, no, you should be using the white entrance in this restaurant. And so the story, I think, was kind of, okay, what, what is happening here? What is this negotiation that both Black and white Southerners knew to redirect this Latino family to this other entrance? So part of what I talk about in the book is this distinction between Black and non Black Latinos, um, and the kind of segregated Latino history that the South really reveals, that The experience of Black Latinos stands in direct contrast to non Black Latinos who, prior to the 1970s, basically were living as what I call provisionally white.

They could do the things like I just mentioned with the Enriquez family. They could attend white schools. They could intermarry into white families. They could use white accommodations. All of these kinds of things we associate with some, with the privileges of whiteness in the South. And it wasn't a sort of a perfect Whiteness and it wasn't a passing, you know, I'm really clear that they aren't passing as white, they're actually being racialized in some ways as Latino, but they get to benefit from most of the sort of most, the most important things, um, in Jim Crow.

And Black Latinos alternatively are segregated into Black neighborhoods. They're attending Black schools. They're subject to the kinds of police violence that we might associate with Blackness, um, with white supremacy in this time period.

And so trying to understand the difference between those two groups was, was one of the origin stories of this project, which is how do we tell a Latino history of the South? And what it became clear is that we can't really, we can't tell a kind of unified Latino history of the South. We have to mark that history in some way.

It has to be a Black Latino history or a non Black Latino history, because part of the other distinction, I mean, my story is about Latinos, right? But the South is actually a pretty diverse place. Contrary to the way that we think about it. But a lot of these other groups, when we think about Asian, Italian, Irish, Syrian, Lebanese, all of these populations that were living in the South prior to the

1950s, 60s, and 70s, they all had this kind of position that they could move in certain white spaces, but not others.

When we look at the history of the South through the lens of Latinos, we see that anti Blackness is the kind of structuring racial logic through which all people are being filtered. And so some Latinos are certainly benefiting from whiteness, and some are not. And, um, that's the kind of core thinking...

And I think you see that kind of Black studies training there, um, in this argument and the ways that people like W.E. B. Du Bois taught me about how the race works in the South and how the global color line is connected to places like the South.

Gerry: Totally. You know, when I hear Black, white, or Black, non Black, I'm wondering You know, if you could just tease out some of the differences, I don't know if it's just a rhetorical difference or whatever, but between non Black and white, what I hear a little bit is just, you know, like thinking about the ongoing debate about Latino racial categorization in the census, I mean, Latinos who are not Black, still don't want to call themselves white.

Even if they've been racialized by others is that way. They still don't think of themselves as white. So I don't know if you, you know, how do you hear the difference between Black and white, Black and non Black and what is the difference between non Black and white?

Cecilia: Well, I think I mean, to the to the point that your colleague made, right?

I think there are absolutely white Latinos. I think there are Black Latinos. And then I think there's a lot of Latinos who are racialized as Latino, right? Some of that has to do with indigeneity. Some of that has to do with color and region and location and class a million different things, right?

There's a million different stories to be told in places like California and Arizona and Texas. But when we look to the south, what I find is that regardless of those differential, the different markers around color and class and things like that, prior again to the 1970s, Latinos could still access whiteness, right, that they could still access these things.

But again, part of the reason I say not Black is it's not that they were passing, right? They're not being welcomed in as white people. There's lots of things they couldn't do. They couldn't join fraternal organizations or go to country

clubs. They weren't members of the Klan, right? So there's things that they, there's parts of white supremacy and whiteness that they couldn't access.

And so I want to be clear that many of them are in fact, not white. Some of them were, some of them were white people who white Latin Americans who come to the South and become white Southerners. But some of them were, were darker skinned, some of them were poor, some of them were undocumented. There's a lot of different ways of being Latino in the South, but regardless, you're, the differentiation that I find is around the question of Blackness.

So, um, I'm thinking again about Julie Wise's work when she finds, um, in Arkansas that Braceros show up in the 1940s and while they do initially experience discrimination, this sort of more working class, more darker skin population doing agricultural work, they're eventually able to lobby to be able to access white accommodations in Jim Crow, Arkansas, right?

And that's something that their Black counterparts were never going to be able to do. And so the distinction of, of white, uh, of using sort of not Black as opposed to white is acknowledging that Latinos can be both nonwhite and benefit profoundly from white supremacy.

Gerry: Well put. Absolutely. You know, this is, this is a kind of slight departure from your book, but you're a Latino historian, historian of the South.

And I've, I think I've read historians talk about things like the re Hispanicization of the South because, you know, the people who note that in the 16th century there were Spanish explorers landing in Florida or Cabeza de Vaca wandering from Florida to New Mexico and, um, you know, looking at the South as a kind of Spanish Place, you know, part of the Spanish world more than anything else, indigenous world, of course.

But, uh, you know, in terms of like European arrivals, we're talking about Spanish America more than British America. But when you hear that, when you hear like the re Hispanicization of the South, do you connect those two periods? You know, the 16th century with today with today, or are they really just two fundamentally different stories?

Cecilia: I, I think that's always a complicated argument. I think where we start Latino history is a political statement, right? And if we're deciding to start it with Spanish sort of, um, Spanish presence in Florida and, and other places in the South, then in some ways we're telling on ourselves about the extent to

which we are still deeply tied to conquest, colonization, and whiteness as a community, right?

And that's okay if that's what we want to say. Um, I think there's something to be said there among about what Latino history and Latino studies is. But, I will say that I think when I look at who is migrating to the South today, it's not the same people, right? This is increasingly. Over time, it's become sort of from further and further south in Mexico and into Central America.

I mean, we're talking about in places like in places like North Carolina, big Maya communities Purépecha communities, and these are indigenous communities that are reconstituting themselves in the United States. And so this idea that they would have the same kind of origin story or be in any way connected to these, like, you know, conquistadores I think would be, um, deeply offensive to them.

Although perhaps an interesting comment on the origin stories of Latino studies and Latino history and our, our sort of continued investments in, in conquest. But, um, I would say that they're from pretty different origin stories. Perhaps, you know, and I was about to say, maybe the only thing they have in common is language, but what's really fascinating is those Maya and Purépecha communities I'm talking about, many of them don't speak Spanish when they get here.

And so I don't even know really what links. Yeah, links those two stories. That's not, that's not the way I think about it. And I will say that does actually connect to my work because one of the things that I talk a lot about in the book and especially when I'm talking to communities about this is, what I say is, you know, what my project shows is that we have been in the South for a long time.

We are not newcomers here. We are not new arrivals. And as a result, we get to claim the South. We get to say that we are Latino Southerners. The South is Latino and Latinos are from the South. And at the same time, we are, have to be accountable to the Southern history that we are a part of. So the same way that we're going to get to claim the South, we get to say, no more are we pretending that we are not part of this region, we also have to reckon with the ways that we have been implicated in, invited into, and enmeshed with white supremacy throughout this history. And so it's both a kind of reclamation of the fact that we are the South, and we can be a part of the kind of most radical parts of the southern history and, and we also have to be honest about the ways that our prehistory in this, in this area means that we have to be constantly attentive to the ways that we are entangled with white supremacy and anti Blackness.

Gerry: That's beautiful. For me, you know, one of the really powerful ways. or the really powerful way that that argument comes alive is through the particular case studies that you write about. So I think listeners would be interested in learning a little bit more about Carla Galarza, for example, um, who was someone who was just inherently going to be of interest to people working in the field of Latino history and Latino studies since she's the daughter of Ernesto Galarza.

Why don't you tell us a little bit about Carla Galarza and what drew you to her case?

Cecilia: So Carla Galarza is the stepdaughter of Ernesto Galarza, who's a leader in the farm labor movement of the 1940s. Um, in the late 1940s, his family, along with several other Latin American families and some Latino families, moved to Washington, D.C. as part of the D. C. 's kind of growing presence on the national stage. After World War Two, the U. S. really emerges as a superpower. And as a result, there's a kind of growth in the embassy population in D. C. So he goes there in part to work as a member of the Organization of American States, which at the time was called the Pan American Union.

And so the Galarza family, I am sort of interested in them in part because of the way that they open up the story about these Latin Americans in D.C., which is a deeply Jim Crow city at this time in the 1940s, but also because Carla Galarza in 1947, tries to attend the Margaret Murray Washington Vocational School to become a dressmaker.

And this is a school that it's an all Black school, Jim Crow segregated. And she attends for I think about a month or a month and a half when she's kicked out for being quote, not a Negro. And that's sort of what the chapter, that's the chapter title that's "not a Negro." What does this mean? And this is one of the places that I get this category of not Black, because what's sort of fascinating is that Carla Galarza is in fact white.

However, all of these administrators, because she's the daughter or stepdaughter of Ernesto Galarza, assume that she's Mexican, assume she's Mexican American. And they go through all of these kind of hoops to try and figure out what do we do with her? Where do we place her? How do we, situate this girl, she can't attend this school because she's not a negro, their language. But what, but what do we do here?

And, and ultimately they kick her out and say, you should attend a white school because you've attended white schools in the past. She had attended a white

school in Arlington, Virginia, right outside of the district. And so they're like, look, you, you're not, white, but you're also not Black. And for that reason, you're going to need to attend a white school.

And so, you know, it's sort of fascinating because it's happening in 1947, not coincidentally, the same year as the Mendez v. Westminster case, right? So at that time, Sylvia Mendez is fighting to get into, uh, a white school at the same time that Carla Galarza is getting kicked out of a quote unquote colored school.

And of course, I think both of those stories tell us a lot about Latinos and white supremacy and how we've been implicated in that. But the the story of Carla Galarza just becomes this kind of fascinating "what could have been" because things like groups like the ACLU, the NAACP, I mean, this sort of works its way up.

All these groups are like, should we take this case? What do we do? I don't, you know, and it ends up fizzling out in part because of some sort of constitutional concerns about the case. But it's a really interesting opening into understanding how, um, Latinos lived in D. C. at this time. And, and the story is, is sort of consistent with what I was talking about earlier.

Um, non Black Latinos are living in white neighborhoods. Black Latinos are living in Black neighborhoods. There's a story that I tell in there about Elizabeth Martinez, who would become a Chicana feminist leader. And she grows up in D. C. and her, her father's part of an, an, um, an embassy, excuse me. Thanks.

And she remembers living in a white neighborhood and her neighbor being told not to play with her as a little girl because she was Mexican. And she talks about this kind of exclusion she felt and the pain that she felt in those moments. What's sort of fascinating is, is the way that this distills in a lot of ways, this provisional whiteness category, which is she's in a white space in a white neighborhood, benefiting from all of the kind of material things associated with living in a white neighborhood and attending a white school while also experiencing that exclusion.

At the same time, someone like Fatima Cortez, who's a young, at the, around the same time, a young Afro Puerto Rican girl, who's trying to travel from New York, where she lives, to do a trip in D. C., is told she can't go because the hotel won't let her stay. Because she's a Black Puerto Rican girl. And so this, you know, this kind of inclusion that, um, Elizabeth Martinez feels while at the same time being kind of bullied or mistreated or all these kinds of painful associations she has, Fatima doesn't even get to get there, right? She's not even allowed to

stay in the hotel because she's a Black Puerto Rican girl. And so that's kind of the story that I'm saying, which is like, when we talk about Latino history, it's so important. It's segregated. It's, it's a segregated history when we look at the south and, and the experiences of these people are just fundamentally different.

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Gerry: These people like Carla Galarza and Betita Martinez, it shows how racial formation happened for actual people through their, their lived experiences. And one of the things that I loved about your book is it kind of operates in these, in these Different sorts of registers to hear in the case of Carla you there are these kind of real world consequences of racial formation and thinking about Latinos as racialized or non racialized beings or something like that as though like white was non racialized somehow. One of the things I loved about your book is how you also have these other registers like just symbols and and symbols of whiteness and mexicaness and you have a chapter about uh, I god, what is it a rest stop a restaurant?

Cecilia: I felt like we were getting to south of the border

Gerry: Yea, South of the border It's a rest stop because it's different right? I mean you have like This person's experience in dc being impacted in a real way by her racial categorization, but then you have these other spaces where kind of race is made like South of the Border.

And so, first of all, just, I'm sure you get asked this all the time. Is this just like a place you happened upon one day since it still exists?

Cecilia: It's actually a fellow colleague of ours, Christina Beltran, who is at NYU. I met her years ago when I was at UVA and I was telling her about the project. She's like, Oh, well, you're, you must be writing about south of the border, right?

And I was like, wait, what? So I Google it, right? I Google this place and I'm like, I was so shocked and horrified. And for those who don't know, congratulations. And for those who do, I'm sorry. It's a, it's a, it's a rest stop right in between or it's right south of the North Carolina border. So it's a Mexican themed rest stop.

It's like a super racist Disneyland. And the kind of the Mickey mouse of the rest stop would be this character called Pedro, which is like if Speedy Gonzalez was like a human, basically it's like, it's. The worst kind of racial stereotyping you can imagine, and it's originally south of the North Carolina border because a bunch of, um, cities in the North Carolina area go dry.

And so the south of the border is usually is initially a kind of wink to you can come get booze here. And eventually, in part as a suggestion by Strom Thurmond, fascinating cameo here, that Strom Thurmond recommends to the, the entrepreneur who opens this place, Alan Schaefer, that he should make it a kind of a full rest stop, not just a place to go get alcohol, because then you can get the kind of family values folks on your side, right?

Then it becomes a more family friendly place. And so it becomes south of the border. And so what I'm interested in is this is a place that's open in 1949 in South Carolina. There is not a substantial Latino population there at this time. So every other chapter is about actual Latinos, and this is a chapter that's about how ideas about Latinos are circulating throughout the South in this time.

And so in the, so it's, it opens in 1949, it's, it's sort of Mexican theme takes full form, Pedro, who is the mascot, again, the kind of Mickey Mouse of the place, has this sort of thick, accented speech that, um, is part of all of the billboards, all of the promotions, and it becomes a real... in addition to being a tourist stop, which is originally what it's designed for, it's originally designed for people going from New York to Florida.

It's on I-95, it's right in the middle. And so that's what it was originally targeted for, but it becomes a real place for locals, for local South Carolinians, North Carolinians. Famously, when I was doing archival research, a local high school went there to learn about Latin American culture.

Gerry: Oh no.

Cecilia: Which is, you know, kind of like an uh oh, because it's like, You know, this Jewish entrepreneur who created this absolute stereotype of what Mexicanness might be.

And, you know, part of what I, I'm interested in is why, why Mexico in this moment, right? Why Latin America? What is going on here? And part of what I think there's, there's a couple of things that happen. One is, It's in one of the most socially and religiously conservative parts of the country at this time.

And there's something about Mexican-ness and Latin American-ness in general that allows people to kind of escape. It's a place that they associate with booze, with beautiful women, with gambling, with transgression in general. And so they see this as a place that they can transgress when they can't do that in their other communities.

It's full of kind of sexual humor and sexual innuendo and things like that. That's not really what's happening in South Carolina in this moment. And, and one of the things I noticed is that this this kind of thick accented speech that Pedro has also has southern accent, has a southern accent too. So, you know, he says things like y'all, he advertises confederate chicken, there's a kind of southernness to Pedro.

And my question was like, Look, you could just take Speedy Gonzalez and land him in South Carolina. Why make him Southern, too? What's going on there? And so this gets sort of more turned up by 1961, which to align with the centennial of the Civil War, all this commemoration that's happening, Alan Schafer, the founder of South of the Border, opens Confederateland at South of the Border.

So it's a Confederate theme park in the Mexican park of South of the Border. Pedro is there as a cartoon, he's dressed in his confederate uniform, Alan Schaefer, this Jewish man from South Carolina, also in a confederate uniform, mysteriously. And I think what I, what I argue in that chapter is that South of the border, and Mexican-ness in particular, served important needs of white southerners in that moment.

Getting to play with race in a time when the civil rights movement was really coming to fruition in a lot of places in the south. I mean, 1961, in addition to being the year that Confederateland opens, is really the height in some ways of the sit in movement, not that far from South of the Border. And so as the civil rights movement is gaining steam, Mexican ness, Latino ness becomes a kind of refuge for white people to get to still play with race, play with ideas about racial domination, but also that these fantasies about Latinos could be, um, sort of put in service of like lost cause ideology, right?

That for white Southerners, they're losing a lot of their way of life, but Pedro is still there fighting for them. And so I was interested in, in why they, they did this. And what I sort of suggest is that, that the ideas about Latinos in the South at this time are not just, Speedy Gonzalez landed in South Carolina, that they're doing some important regional work and changing the ideas about Latinos to serve their particular needs.

And so, you know, I think this gets to the broader part of the book, which is that Latino-ness in the South is in some ways distinct from Latino ness elsewhere, both in terms of the actual experience of Latinos, but also the fantasies of white Southerners about that population.

Gerry: Mm, yeah, absolutely. For, uh, my Mexican American listener in my head who lives in California and wants to understand about Latino racial formation in the U.S. South, what would you, what would you tell them, just in the broadest terms, about how racial formation in the South is different than other Latino heavy regions in the country like New York or California? Some of this I think you've already alluded to, but um, but just as a specific question, what would you say?

Cecilia: Yea, I would say there's a couple... so I say there's two big answers. One is timing, and one is the economy and like labor. So, when we think about places like California, New York, Texas, Arizona, you know, the places that have had, um, but really the places where we've written Latino history already. The places where the dominant paradigms about when and where Latinoness emerges come from.

Those are places that have had Latino populations for centuries, right? I mean, some of them were, were Mexico. You know what I mean? We think about Texas where it's like, that used to be Mexico and then all of a sudden it became the U. S. and so begins a kind of Latino history after that annexation or, or theft of land.

So part of what's different about the South is we don't have large scale Latino migration to the South until really the 1980s. And so a lot of these paradigms about Latinos in California and other, in the West and the Southwest are really formed by, you know, the early 1900s at the latest, right?

I mean, there's these big, longstanding ideas about Latinos in those areas. And part of the reason for that, of course, is this question about labor. That Latinos are the majority of the kind of agricultural workforce. When we think about

those areas, they're, they're doing agricultural labor. They're doing other kinds of menial labor.

They're doing other, they're sort of the backbone in a lot of ways of big chunks of the economy of those areas. That's different in the South. Right. That's really it is. It is really African Americans and Black people more generally that are the kind of core of the labor force when we think about agriculture in the southeast in particular.

And so part of part of those differences is that, you know, one of the things that we do, one of the reasons we create ideas about race is to manage and control labor and manage and control people. And so in places like the West and the Southwest, it's really important that Mexicans, Mexican Americans, Latinos more broadly are sort of managed and controlled because there's such a powerful part of the workforce that's less important in the Southeast until you get to like the 1980s and 1990s.

And it's around that time that you start to get a sort of a more solidified idea about what Hispanic-ness means, for example, in the South. There's not a real concept of Hispanic in places like Georgia or North Carolina until you get to the 1990s. So when we think, when we tell the story about Latino history, when we talk about the Great Depression, when we talk about the war, World War I and World War II as these kind of defining moments about around Latino identity formation or Mexican American identity formation, those are quite different in the Southeast. Those identities aren't really coming together and coalescing until the 1990s.

And so that's a really different, you know, that's a really different timeline. The other thing that's obviously different about the Southeast is the history of slavery. You know, the fact that there was a long standing history of chattel slavery in the Southeast undeniably shapes the way that we live.

That all people were racialized as a result, right? Cause it's not just the history of slavery. It's the history of reconstruction. It's the history of Jim Crow. It's the, it's all of these sort of systems that are put in place to manage Black labor and Black life that Latinos are inevitably understood through.

And so those are some of the reasons that the stories that we know about California might look really different than something like Alabama. When we talk about how, how race and region come together. Okay.

Gerry: Absolutely. I'm glad towards the middle of your answer, you started talking about the 80s, 90s, because, uh, you know, this is, this is what your book begins to focus on about halfway through to the end of the book.

And, you know, uh, things have changed as you argue, you know, uh, in the 40s, 50s, 60s. 70s, you argue that there was kind of room within whiteness for Latinos, but that changed by the 80s and 90s. You began to allude to the reasons why, but I wonder if you could say a little bit more about what some of the things are that changed by the 90s to the present.

Cecilia: I can talk a little bit about what's happening in Dalton, Georgia to get to this question. So I look at Dalton, Georgia, which for those who don't know is the carpet capital of the world, which they love to talk about anyone from Dalton's like very proud of that. In the 1990s, fully two thirds of carpet in the United States was made in Dalton, Georgia.

And I look at. What happens there in the 1990s. There's a massive increase of Latino migration in part as a result of the Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986, which was an amnesty. It did a lot of things, but one of the things it did was give amnesty to nearly 3 million undocumented immigrants under the Reagan administration.

And so what it did was it regularized the status of a lot of people, um, who are living in these urban centers and were excited to with their new citizenship, get out of those urban centers, right? They were like, I don't really like the city. I'm from a rural part of Mexico. I want to go to a rural part of the United States.

And so one of the things that happens is there's these, um, sort of pull factors on the parts of Latino desires. The other thing that's happening is that these companies are actively recruiting Latinos. So this is places like Dalton with carpet, but also poultry is the hugest one food processing in general.

They're actively recruiting Latinos, both in the United States and in Mexico. And so in the 1990s, the demographics of somewhere like Dalton changed dramatically. And so that chapter is trying to understand why in the 1990s does the Dalton public school system decide to start a bilingual education program that recruits teachers from Monterrey, Mexico to Dalton, Georgia, at the same time that California is proposing Prop 187, which is one of the, at that point, harshest state-level, anti immigrant legislation, anti immigration legislations to date at that moment in 1994.

What is going on that Georgia is this place that is such a warm, welcoming place for immigrants and where, whereas California, a real hub of Latino political power is, is this kind of like harsh anti immigrant space. And one of the things I argue is that it does have to do with labor and the economy.

And that basically, these carpet industry elites desperately needed Latino labor and Latino labor basically saved in a lot of ways the carpet industry and several other industries throughout the southeast, including things like poultry and they, as a result of the recruitment of Latino labor, these industries explode in the area.

And one of the things I find in the 1990s is that unlike what's happening in California, there's this really complicated warm welcome. It's this, we see a lot of people talking about how hardworking the Hispanic immigrants are in places like Atlanta who are building the Olympic, the Olympic city in 1996.

And so, you know, I think I sort of trouble what it means to be a hardworking immigrant in the sense that the difference between Being hardworking and able to be worked hard as a result of a precarious status as a result of your economic situation, citizenship status, things like that. But it's a really kind of warm welcome that happens in the 1990s in the South, and it's really not until basically 911 and the Great Recession, and that's the kind of the end of the book, that things take a turn.

I mean, when we think about Latinos in the South today, we might think about what happens in 2010 with this kind of draconian anti immigrant legislation in places like Georgia, Alabama, Mississippi. But in a lot of ways, those represent a dramatic break and shift in the long history of Latinos in the U.S. South. That kind of anti immigrant sentiment is a relatively new phenomenon. And in some ways, is a result of the integration of the south into the rest of the sort of Sun Belt and the nation as a result of the kind of expansion of industry, the expansion of media markets, all of these different things. But the story ends with, um, 911, which we see the rise of things like 287G agreements, which deputized local police to act as border and cus... ICE officials, basically, so that, you know, Things like having a broken taillight can lead to the beginning of a detention and deportation proceedings. So we have this massive expansion of the surveillance state.

And then in 2008, there's a Great Recession. And for any of us who know Latino history, economic contraction, depressions are bad for us. They are not good for Latinos, for immigrants in general, because it's a, I mean, since the Great Depression, we've seen this, that when the economy is booming, you know, Latinos are these hardworking immigrants, they're doing all these great things. And once the economy contracts, Latinos are seen as drains on precious resources, stealing American jobs, and the same thing happens in the South. And so what happens is 911 has created a ton more capacity for police and other kinds of officials to detain and deport people. And then 2008 produces the kind of, I should say, like emotional conditions for that scapegoating.

Right? And so all of a sudden, the same people who are being told or being described as godsons as and lifebloods, the same, those exact same people are now being targeted by these 287G program. So somewhere like Dalton gets a 287G program, where all of a sudden, you know, when you talk to folks in Dalton, they talk about the difference between that before and after 911, before and after 2008. That there's a real shift in the kinds of the, the random stops, the random checks, all these different things that start to target their communities. Um, and so the story ends, I think, where most of us might associate with the current status of Latinos in the Southeast, which is, um, subject to a lot of policing, subject to immigration enforcement, subject to all kinds of racial projects and these kind of racial exclusions, it's not sort of where it ends, but again, I, I ended there in part to say, this is a surprising exception, actually, in the long history of Latinos in the South.

And so this idea of Latinos as kind of like good hardworking people doesn't necessarily coalesce in the same way. So it's, it's changing. It's, it's a really different 2023 is quite different than 2010. And then a lot of ways deciding to end the book in 2010 was, um, a response to this kind of growth in legislation.

But, but the story is so different today even, and it's, it's sort of constantly changing underneath our feet.

Gerry: That's super interesting. Thank you so much. So thank you so much, uh, Cecilia for joining us and everyone go read making the Latino South a history of racial formation published in, uh, fall of 2023, I should say by the university of North Carolina press.tt

Cecilia: Thank you.

Gerry: Thank you for listening to this episode of writing Latinos. We'd love to hear your suggestions for new books that we should be reading and talking

about. Drop us a line at Geraldo at publicbooks.org. This episode is brought to you by Public Books. It was produced by Tasha Sandoval. Our music is City of Mirrors by the Chicago based band Dos Santos.

I'm Geraldo Cadava. We'll see you again next time.