

Book Reviews

Alyshia Galvez, *Guadalupe in New York: Devotion and Struggle for Citizenship Rights among Mexican Immigrants*. (New York: NYU Press, 2009). xiii, 256 pp., \$27 paper.

Alyshia Galvez's *Guadalupe in New York* is an important contribution to a growing body of sociological and anthropological work devoted to immigrants and their fight for basic human rights in the United States. Galvez, a cultural anthropologist, uses interviews and observations to study the process of *guadalupeñismo* (worship of Mexico's patron saint, Our Lady of Guadalupe) among recent Mexican immigrants in New York City. Between 2000 and 2008, Galvez gathered information on Marian worship by following members of *comites* *guadalupeños*, or social groups organized by parish, and explains her methodology in a useful appendix. Galvez argues that through these *comites*, undocumented Mexican immigrants engage in "political, activist activities which enhance their sense of well-being in material, lived and symbolic ways while their juridical status remains unchanged" (4). More specifically, it is Galvez's sophisticated and subtle observations on the connections between religion, politics, and transnational space that make her book a solid founda-

tion for future ethnic studies.

Galvez's most powerful observation in her work is the interconnectivity of *guadalupanismo* and the fight for citizenship rights among undocumented Mexican immigrants in New York. For many of these immigrants, turning to the Virgin for help in the political struggle for a better life in America requires little thought. "Rather than a co-optation of the Virgin's image to a political cause," Galvez explains, "the assertion of Guadalupe's support of the struggle for the rights of immigrants is logical...[for] to question that she naturally supports the struggle of her devotees for rights and dignities would be to question her" (81). Rather than simply stating that Mexican immigrants use religion to advance their political goals, Galvez takes her argument one step farther by stating that *guadalupanismo* in America transcends politics, for when immigrants evoke the image of the Virgin for help, they are calling on her for protection and assistance in securing the most basic of human rights. Undocumented Mexican immigrants are undocumented in the eyes of lawmakers, not God. These immigrants deserve citizenship rights as children of God, forming a powerful argument for privileges based on religion rather than politics alone. Galvez's argument is essential for future sociological and anthropological works that seek to analyze and understand how immigrants of all backgrounds approach politics and activism through the lens of religion. As Galvez points out to her readers, it is practically impossible to separate religion from politics among members of the *comites*.

Galvez centers another fascinating argument in her book on the role of transnational space in the development of *guadalupanismo* in New York. The idea that immigrants are transnational in the sense that they often transport and retain parts of their home cultures when migrating to America is a standard argument in many works of immigration; however, Galvez argues for sociologists and anthropologists to delve deeper into the mi-

gratory experience of immigrants by examining the dynamic nature of migration itself. Among members of the comites in New York, many report that their devotion to the Virgin has grown stronger now that they are living in America. The very process of migrating from Mexico, to the United States, and then to New York City and relying on the Virgin for assistance and guidance through treacherous times along the journey revolutionizes Marian devotion (72). To say that Mexican immigrants simply carry religious traditions with them to America from Mexico excludes the important transformations in devotion and worship that occur in the transnational space between home and the new country. This element of Galvez's work is critical for understanding what changes in the political and religious conscience of undocumented immigrants occur while crossing borders. More importantly, Galvez's focus on the importance of transnational spaces in migration creates new avenues for research in a field that often struggles with the definition of transnational itself.

While Galvez does an excellent job of analyzing often over-looked aspects of migration and religion, her work could benefit from a more in-depth discussion of the role of gender in *guadalupanismo* among undocumented Mexican immigrants in New York. Galvez briefly mentions the fact that more women than men attend the weekly Wednesday night meetings for comites (124), but she does not give many details on why this is so or how this may be a process of migration. In a form of religion that is devoted to a female figure, it would have been interesting to see how gender roles in *guadalupanismo* may have changed or remained the same in the transnational space of migration. Overall, however, Galvez's work is a fascinating addition to studies of recent undocumented migrants and religion in America.

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