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Lisa Magaña. *Mexican Americans and the Politics of Diversity*. Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2005. 136p.

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Magaña's book is one in a series about "The Mexican American Experience" designed to present college undergraduates and their instructors with the necessary information regarding the circumstances and life of this specific population in the U.S. The main objective of this book is to give an answer to the misleading perception that Mexican Americans do not participate in politics as much as other segments of U.S. society since their voter turnout and party affiliation is considerably lower. Instead, Magaña discusses Mexican Americans as facing politics not so much through their participation in elections, an option that sometimes historically and legally has been denied, but through other techniques such as the proposal of new laws, the mobilization of local groups and associations, and the defense of particular interests through lobbying. All these methods show how Mexican Americans are highly interested and involved in the political system, influencing local and national policy and, more than ever, presidential campaigns, surpassing even African Americans.

The book is divided into six chapters, containing also an introduction, a glossary, and a thematic index. The introduction, besides describing the outline and purpose of the book, presents the individuals who were interviewed in the preparation of its composition. Each of the chapters afterwards is used to demonstrate the development of Mexican Americans as a political community today and throughout history. The first section, dedicated to analyzing this community's involvement in politics nowadays, describes the differences in religion, cultural practices, socioeconomic status, and even language within this group. Mexican Americans have various types of organizations to defend their interests, depending on their time of residence and their work and legal status. For Magaña, the political affiliation of Mexican Americans is diverse, although she later clarifies a tendency toward democrat more than republican, defining their assimilation as cultural, based on the close relationship between Mexico and the U.S. and the relative ease in moving from one country to another. Demographically, Mexicans make up 66% of the total Latino population, and they are becoming an increasingly important influence in elections as well as in changes in education, economic prosperity and media outlets. In education, although only 35% of this population has a high school diploma and 26% a college degree, the vast majority do not surpass this type of education and that is felt also in the level of wealth of Mexican Americans and their participation in elections since the blue-collar workers are more inclined to vote than the service sector.

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The second chapter considers Mexican Americans through history and the effect their past experiences have on their present. From the Spanish Conquistadors to the Chicano Movement, the history of Mexicans and Mexican Americans has been one of oppression, corruption, and the fight to reclaim cultural, economic, and political rights. Spanish conquerors killed and dominated the indigenous populations. The relationship between the U.S. government and Mexican Americans has been one of resistance and persecution. For more than two centuries, the Anglo settlers of the north took land from the Mexican owners, denied rights to Mexican Americans who were citizens and residents of the U.S., persecuted Mexicans who had been accepted as immigrants and residents to work in the fields and during the war, and repatriated a half a million Mexican and U.S. citizens of Mexican origin. During the Great Depression, President Hoover used Mexican Americans as scapegoats, blaming them for the economic and employment situation of the country; since then, it has been a continuous fight to defend the interests of Mexican Americans and protect their rights. To that end, there has been the creation of organizations and movements like the Chicano movement, the League of United Latin American Citizens, the Mexican American Legal Defense and Education Fund, the National Council of La Raza, and others that have worked to promote political agendas regarding economic and educational rights, civil and labor rights, elimination of discrimination, and increased political involvement of Mexican Americans.

Chapters three and four describe the distinction among Mexican Americans regarding party affiliation and the election of Latino leaders and the contributions of women to political endeavors. For the author, electoral voting is not one of the strengths in this group due, among other reasons, to discontentment with the system and the idea that their vote is not going to make a difference. This is what for Magaña contributes to the perception that Mexican Americans are politically indifferent. Mexican Americans tend to vote democrat, although many have social conservative views on abortion and gay marriage, for instance. They tend to vote for Mexican American candidates although they distrust their level of commitment in keeping their promises. On the other hand, the role of women in politics includes their increasing election to public offices but, more importantly, the issues they have regarding the situation of Mexican American women, the local communities and problems like immigration, business, and technology. These women were brought up in working-class neighborhoods have been used to participating in politics from a very young age through local organizations.

The last two chapters of Magaña's book explain the political issues affecting the Mexican American community at this moment and also give a view of the future. Education, community relations, immigration, and intervention by the Federal

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Government are the essential issues. Concerning education, the author calls for more programs to retain, recruit, and motivate students to continue their education to the highest levels. The community connections may be solved through a raise in the minimum wage, the improvement of working conditions, the hiring of more Mexican American civil servants, and the support of cultural events. Finally, the issues of immigration and the Federal Government may be worked out through changing the role of the INS in the lives of Mexican immigrants, the implementation of the Binational programs agreed upon between Presidents Bush and Fox, and the development of a possible amnesty program. The federal government should invest in programs that help the mobility and raise the social and economic status of Mexican Americans instead of cutting services.

This book seems an indispensable tool in getting acquainted with the political situation of Mexican Americans. It is clear and to the point. It can be used in classrooms from political science to any type of course that may require the study of this segment of the U.S. population. The characteristic that may strike the reader's attention the most is that the author explains very clearly the causes of the problems, the problem themselves, and the possible solutions. In addition, throughout the chapter and apart from the general topic, there are small articles written about issues or people who changed the Mexican American political arena. In this regard, for instance, it is interesting to read about the heroes of the working class like Zapata and Pancho Villa, about the life and work of César Chavez and other prominent elected officials such as Henry B. González or Lucille Roybal-Allard. The glossary at the end of the book is a comprehensive and very important tool to understand some of the vocabulary and issues.

The only criticism would be the sometimes confusing exchange in talking about Mexican Americans within the Latino Community. Although Magaña states very clearly that these groups cannot be considered interchangeable, in some cases the use of statistics of Latino populations instead of Mexican American statistics may impede understanding of the situation and problems of the latter. ✱