

dence from the ideas of American Exceptionalism. Instead, it shows how the U.S. gained independence largely because of the rivalry between the global powers of the time. Bell also shows that the United States was not only shaped by British influence but a global surge in Enlightenment thought. The country's revolutionary ideas were therefore not original but the result of that melting pot. Historians of all backgrounds looking for a global perspective on the origins of the United States would be well served by reading this book. Non-academics, meanwhile, will appreciate the book's approachable writing and use of idioms.

*Jayden Feliciano*

Molina, Natalia. *A Place at the Nayarit: How a Mexican Restaurant Nourished a Community*. University of California Press, 2022. Pp. 312. Hardcover \$29.95.

Natalia Molina, Professor of American Studies and Ethnicity at the University of Southern California, examines the people who created a foundational public space and the community dynamics that emerged from sustained social connections rooted there. This work sheds light on everyday life around the Nayarit, a former restaurant on Sunset Boulevard in Echo Park, and argues that marginalized people developed social cohesion and fostered mutual care because Doña Natalia Barraza, the owner and operator from 1951 to 1976, helped recently immigrated Mexican nationals build human capital through employment, settlement support, and introductions to professional networks that enabled them to thrive in their adopted society.

The book employs a mostly thematic structure while tracing change over time in general chronological order. A synopsis of the history of Echo Park establishes the geographic scope of the study before addressing the concept of *placemaking*. The reader follows the growth and spreads of influence that stemmed from the strictly run operation on Sunset Boulevard as former employees of the Nayarit went on to build their own restaurant businesses. Molina argues that these gains contributed to a rise in political power and societal influence that became transnational.

One of the key arguments of this work is that social networks emerge when people embed themselves in a particular place and develop expertise in the society in which they reside, a process the author terms placemaking. Although marginalized from dominant culture, people continue to exist and end up living on their own terms for survival. *Placemaking* happens when local culture is sustained over time in everyday instances. It is through the continuance of quotidian life.

Doña Natalia's restaurant in Los Angeles maintained a core community over time and created an identity. Without the burdens of segregation, the Nayarit allowed for frequent and positive interactions to occur among customers, employees, and local residents, which led to meaningful long-lasting and mutually beneficial bonds in the Echo Park and wider immigrant community. These positive societal relations promoted camaraderie and confidence among the employees and inspired them to participate in diverse experiences. They ventured out, gained access to new privileges, and experienced upward social mobility.

Urban anchors become sites for community building. These *placemakers* can be civic and cultural institutions, nonprofit organizations, and semi-public spaces to name a few. Doña Natalia operated an urban anchor that allowed her employees to be in propitious positions to pursue and achieve their goals.

The Nayarit offered an alternative for employment during the Bracero Program and a pathway toward citizenship. Migrant agricultural work was a grueling life with injustice and squalid conditions. This marginalized population had no access to wider services nor chances to establish roots. Instead, employment at the restaurant became a vehicle for immigration and the scholar invokes the notion of an "incubator" when describing the opportunities that surfaced for its immigrant employees. Doña Natalia assisted her chosen kin in getting their papers in order, helping them migrate to the United States when it was exceedingly difficult to do so. From this urban anchor, immigrants had access to resources and cultural capital like attorneys, legal advice, and other civic assistance.

The primary source base for this monograph includes state and civic archives, institutional maps and reports, census records, leg-

islation, Supreme Court cases, documented public policy, and recorded real estate transactions. National newspapers and local periodicals include the *Los Angeles Times*, *La Opinión*, the *New York Times*, and the Nayarit, Mexico-based, *El Eco*. Molina also compiled an oral history through dozens of interviews and conversations with former Nayarit employees between 2014 and 2020. Utilized in tandem with written archival sources, the oral tradition provides essential emphasis when constructing a modern historical narrative.

Molina aims to inspire budding historians to document grassroots voices and this pedagogical work models how to utilize oral tradition when constructing historical narratives. This monograph is especially useful for graduate students learning the craft of producing modern scholarship. By combining institutional evidence such as demographic studies and legislative records with oral tradition and local history, the author demonstrates the level of investigation required to uncover stories that support one's thesis.

*A Place at the Nayarit* explores numerous themes central to migration studies, including push and pull factors, transnational connections, segregation, gentrification, hostility, state-sponsored abuse, arbitrary variations of "whiteness", and classism. The book also understatedly elevates previously silenced queer voices while contributing to modern scholarship on immigrant history in Los Angeles.

*Stephen P. Legaspi*

Daughton, J.P. *In the Forest of No Joy: The Congo-Ocean Railroad and the Tragedy of French Colonialism*. New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2021. Pp. 384. Hardcover \$12.76.

Daughton, Professor of History and (by courtesy) French and Italian at Stanford University, argues that the abuses committed in Central Africa during the early twentieth century, particularly the torture and murder of Africans by French colonial officials, were not simply the result of individual cruelty. Instead, these atrocities emerged from a colonial system that demanded authority over vast territories with minimal oversight, and tolerated violence as a routine method to maintain this control.