



Who Defines Indigenous?

Identities, Development, Intellectuals, and the State
in Northern Mexico

by Carmen Martínez Novo

DESCRIPTION

For years, conventional scholarship has argued that minority groups are better served when the majority groups that absorb them are willing to recognize and allow for the preservation of indigenous identities. But is the reinforcement of ethnic identity among migrant groups always a process of self-liberation? In this surprising study, Carmen Martínez Novo draws on her ethnographic research of the Mixtec Indians' migration from the southwest of Mexico to Baja California to show that sometimes the push for indigenous labels is more a process of external oppression than it is of minority empowerment.

In Baja California, many Mixtec Indians have not made efforts to align themselves as a coherent demographic. Instead, Martínez Novo finds that the push for indigenous identity in this region has come from local government agencies, economic elites, intellectuals, and other external agents. Their concern has not only been over the loss of rich culture. Rather, the pressure to maintain an indigenous identity has stemmed from the desire to secure a reproducible abundance of cheap "Indian" labor. Meanwhile, many Mixtecs reject their ethnic label precisely because being "Indian" means being a commercial agriculture low-wage worker or an urban informal street vendor—an identity that interferes with their goals of social mobility and economic integration.

Bringing a critical new perspective to the complex intersection among government and scholarly agendas, economic development, global identity politics, and the aspirations of local migrants, this provocative book is essential reading for scholars working in the fields of sociology, anthropology, and ethnic studies.

AUTHOR/EDITOR BIOGRAPHY

Carmen Martínez Novo is a professor in the Center for Latin American Studies at the University of Florida, Gainesville. She is the editor of the Latin

Paperback

9780813536699, \$38.95

Date: November 2005

Pages: 192



American Research Review journal.

Get 30% OFF • Use code RUP30

Free Shipping in the USA • USA & Latin American: rutgersuniversitypress.org • 1-800-621-2736

Canada: <https://www.ubcpres.ca/rutgers-university-press> • Rest of the World: <https://mngbookshop.co.uk/publisher/rutgers-university-press/>

Booksellers / bulk sales: sales@rutgersuniversitypress.org • Examination and desk copies:
rutgersuniversitypress.org/educator