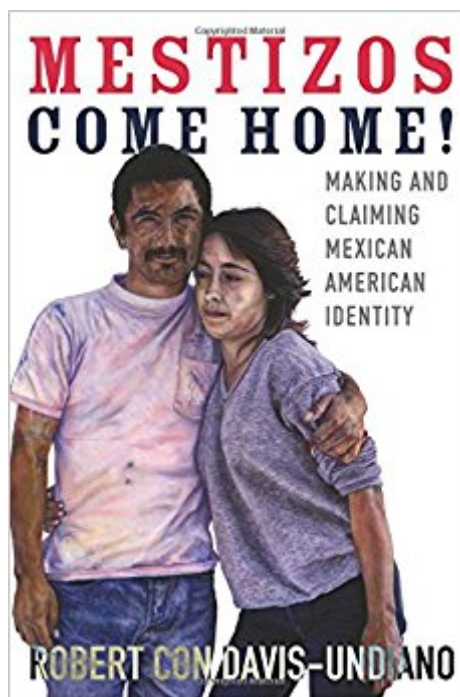




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# Mestizos Come Home!: Making And Claiming Mexican American Identity (Chicana And Chicano Visions Of The Americas Series)



## Synopsis

Uruguayan writer Eduardo Galeano has described U.S. and Latin American culture as continually hobbled by amnesia—unable, or unwilling, to remember the influence of mestizos and indigenous populations. In *Mestizos Come Home!* author Robert Con Davis-Undiano documents the great awakening of Mexican American and Latino culture since the 1960s that has challenged this omission in collective memory. He maps a new awareness of the United States as intrinsically connected to the broader context of the Americas. At once native and new to the American Southwest, Mexican Americans have “come home” in a profound sense: they have reasserted their right to claim that land and U.S. culture as their own. *Mestizos Come Home!* explores key areas of change that Mexican Americans have brought to the United States. These areas include the recognition of mestizo identity, especially its historical development across the nineteenth and twentieth centuries; the re-emergence of indigenous relationships to land; and the promotion of Mesoamerican conceptions of the human body. Clarifying and bridging critical gaps in cultural history, Davis-Undiano considers important artifacts from the past and present, connecting the casta (caste) paintings of eighteenth-century Mexico to modern-day artists including John Valadez, Alma López, and Luis A. Jiménez Jr. He also examines such community celebrations as Day of the Dead, Cinco de Mayo, and lowrider car culture as examples of mestizo influence on mainstream American culture. Woven throughout is the search for meaning and understanding of mestizo identity. A large-scale landmark account of Mexican American culture, *Mestizos Come Home!* shows that mestizos are essential to U.S. national culture. As an argument for social justice and a renewal of America’s democratic ideals, this book marks a historic cultural homecoming.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

“Robert Con Davis-Undiano’s brilliant analysis and presentation of casta paintings and what they mean to the development of New World racism are of immense importance. *Mestizos Come Home!* is a clarion call, reminding us of the intransigent racism mestizos have suffered over the centuries. With great understanding Davis-Undiano calls on mestizos to take pride in their mestizaje.” —Rudolfo Anaya

“This visionary book celebrates the social and cultural contributions Latinos and Latinas make as they forge a better future for the United States of America. A thoughtful consideration of major Mexican American artistic and literary accomplishments, it helps explain the importance of mestizo culture in forging a more equitable and inclusive national identity today. *Mestizos Come Home!* evaluates the significance of such major authors as Rudolfo Anaya, Sandra Cisneros, and Denise Chafetz. It also discusses the social dimensions of lowrider culture, historical memory in Day of the Dead celebrations, the radical visual art of Alma Lfpez, and the racialized portraiture of colonial Mexican Casta paintings.

Davis-Undiano’s book offers a sweepingly comprehensive vision of mestizo culture vital to the nation at a critical moment.” —Rafael Perez-Torres, author of *Mestizaje: Critical Uses of Race in Chicano Culture*

“*Mestizos Come Home!* is a deeply researched, provocative, and compelling study of the ways Mexican Americans have struggled to belong to the place they come from, and to reclaim their heritage in the United States and throughout the Americas. Davis-Undiano provides us with a deep understanding of the cultural strategies and folk traditions that have sustained Mexican Americans for centuries. A must-read for those who wish to understand the future of the United States.” —Neil Foley, author of *Mexicans in the Making of America*

“In this comprehensive study of Mexican American history and culture from colonial times to the present, Robert Con Davis-Undiano offers a historically grounded analysis that questions the misrepresentations heaped on one of the largest U.S. ethnic populations in the United States. *Mestizos Come Home!* joins Mexican American writers and artists who have, as Americans, envisioned their cultural past and present as a journey home and as the promise of renewal, new beginnings, and the enrichment of the American experience. This inspiring and thoroughly researched book perceptively and courageously engages the major ethnic, social, and

political issues facing the United States today. •Roberto CantÃf, editor of The Forked Juniper: Critical Perspectives on Rudolfo Anaya •“Long a force for the study and dissemination of Chicano/a literature as teacher, scholar, and editor, Robert Con Davis-Undiano brings his erudition and his personal experience as an American of Mexican descent to the subject of Mexicans in America in a book that is at once accessible, scholarly, filled with insight, and wonderfully readable. Encompassing the history and magnitude of the contributions of Mexican people, literature, and culture to the fabric of America, *Mestizos Come Home!* is an important book by an important author, and it couldn’t come at a more opportune time.” •Rilla Askew, author of *Kind of Kin: A Novel* “*Mestizos Come Home!* is a work of great intellect that shares Eduardo Galeano’s vision of a people freed of a broken sense of history. Davis-Undiano provides a map bridging past and present, which is so essential not only to the spiritual and political empowerment of Latinos but also to anyone who wants to take that journey with us. This is a compelling read with an urgent, welcome message.” •Demetria Martinez, author of *Confessions of a Berlitz-Tape Chicana* “*Mestizos Come Home!* is a game-changer that all Latinos, scholars and others, need to read.” •Francisco LomelÃf, coeditor of *Aztlan: Essays on the Chicano Homeland* “A wide-ranging, insightful, and convincing analysis of Mexican-American issues.” •Kirkus Reviews

Robert Con Davis-Undiano is Neustadt Professor and Presidential Professor at the University of Oklahoma and Executive Director of World Literature Today. Among his many publications are *The Paternal Romance: Reading God-the-Father in Early Western Culture and Criticism* and *Culture: The Role of Critique in Modern Literary Theory*.

“I keep reading about *Mestizos Come Home!* as a game-changer for Latinos, urging them to embrace America more and celebrate the huge contributions that they have already made to the U.S. As a white woman, I will also say that this book has been liberating for me. No matter what side of the aisle our political beliefs put us on, all of us who love our country want to see America continue to stand for our core values, to be a strong and “more perfect union.” This means ongoing work to keep the national community vibrant and evolving. This book has been a wonderful reminder of what Latinos have already done and are doing every day to keep America moving in the direction of democracy and social justice. We all know that democracy is a challenge and requires constant work. Citizenship is not just a right, it is a

privilege and a responsibility to contribute. The Latino community exemplifies these values, and this book is the best reminder ever of that. We need to embrace the challenges and responsibilities of citizenship and understand that we reenact our founding as a country every time a new community becomes a part of American culture. We are immigrants all. *Mestizos Come Home!* has reminded me in a delightful way of what Latinos are already doing to make our country better and to move a little closer to achieving a fuller and richer potential for human progress that has always been a part of the American vision. I love this book!

Excellent written discussion of essential issues pertaining to an extremely valuable component of our American family!!

As a biracial individual, I am enjoying learning about my Mexican American background. Almost halfway through! Great read!

Still reading and it's amazing! Great reminder of what my culture has brought to America.

Incredibly well-written book for anyone interested in cultural identities and social justice. After reading Part I, I purchased a second copy for a colleague who teaches Chicano/a literature. After reading further, I am now purchasing a copy for a friend. *Mestizos Come Home!* is an important read for anyone interested in the history, culture, and literature of the mestizo community. A timely topic for us all, for as Dr. Davis-Undiano quotes Virgilio Elizondo, "The future is mestizo." Through this work, we can see that such a future is bright if we acknowledge and celebrate the positive contributions Mexican Americans have made and continue to make.

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