

*La Raza: The Mexican Americans.* By STAN STEINER. New York, 1970. Harper and Row. Illustrations. Index. Pp. xii, 418. \$8.95.

This is a useful book if read with an understanding of the author's purpose. Steiner states: "This book is not a study. It is not a survey. It is about real people . . ." (p. 394). The book is, in fact, a very well-written and sympathetic journalistic report on the Mexican American activists. The author has spent much time talking with Mexican American leaders and their followers. The subjects' feelings and beliefs are clearly communicated. Although the construction is loose, the focus of the book is on three areas of Chicano activity: 1) Tijerina's fight for land in New Mexico; 2) Chávez' fight for a union in the grape fields of California; and 3) the Mexican American field workers' fight for justice in Texas. There are also side-excursions into the thought of urban Mexican American youth and into the more conservative world view of the Spanish-speaking middle class.

Throughout the book one feels the Chicanos' yearnings and quest for identity and participation in a validated Mexican American culture. In part this involves looking back for roots to be found in Indian, Mexican, and U.S. history. In part it is also concerned with a revival of a dynamic Mexican American art, literature, and theater. Above all, perhaps, the Mexican American seeks power to enable him to overcome the social, economic, and political blocks to his own fulfillment. Tijerina sought such power, first in law and then in direct action. Chávez seeks it in a Gandhi-inspired appeal to conscience and humanity. Tijerina's influence, the author states, is being replaced by cooperatives, while the followers of Chávez are gaining strength. In the movements of both leaders is expressed a nostalgic yearning for the traditional culture associated with the land as well as the need for economic and political power. In both the enemy is seen as the Anglo-dominated upper class.

The Mexican American population is beginning to exert itself, and Steiner has vividly captured the anger, frustration, and action in vivid prose. He has done an excellent reporting job on the Mexican American movements in progress, primarily in the words of the Mexican Americans themselves. He specifically avoids any attempt at a deeper analysis. Many minor criticisms could be aimed at the book, such as his superficial view of the pre-Conquest Mexican culture. More irritating are the few cases of error in Spanish and its translation. For example, the work "El Espejo" comes out as "El

Espeso" (p. 224 and p. 403), and somehow he translates "Conejo" as "Rabbit Wire" and "El Nido" as "The Hen's Nest" (p. 336). But such errors are trivial. Read as a report and not as an analysis, this book is fascinating and extremely useful.

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*A History of Mexican Mural Painting.* By ANTONIO RODRÍGUEZ. Translated by MARINA CORBY. New York, 1969. G. P. Putnam's Sons. Illustrations. Notes. Glossary. Index. Pp. 518. \$30.00.

This expensive and luxurious volume has the finest collection of photographed Mexican mural paintings yet published. It is worth buying just for the illustrations.

The text cannot be given such unqualified praise, although in some respects it is excellent. Rodríguez overreached himself by including all Mexican wall painting from the earliest rock shelter art, to which he does less than justice. The section on pre-Columbian painting depends mainly on Villagra, Garibay and León-Portilla and is valuable as a brief summary of some of their ideas in English, but Rodríguez is clearly not at home with the subject. The same may be said of the fifty pages on Colonial and nineteenth-century painting. The virtues of these earlier sections are those of popular journalism.

The reader would be best advised to begin the text on p. 149 with the section "Since the Revolution," for the more recent art is the author's principal interest. In contrast to his generalized treatment of earlier ages, he has first-hand knowledge to impart on the art of the twentieth century. The chapters on the Revolutionary period, Rivera and Orozco—all subjects on which much has been written—provide little that is new except the viewpoint. The most valuable sections deal with the most recent work, beginning with Siqueiros and Tamayo and ending with González Camarena, Chávez Morado, Juan O'Gorman, Manuel Felguérez, and others. The style is informal, and the author does not avoid judgments of quality. His tone is more that of the critic than of the historian.

Rodríguez does not miss the great importance of Siqueiros, who is generally underestimated. The pertinent chapter is the most valuable single part of the book and one of the best essays I know of on Siqueiros. Rodríguez brings out his technical innovations in plastic paints and industrial techniques, his compositional originality, and