



The Robust Mestizaje of the Borderlands: A Mexican Professor's Perspective from San Antonio

After 24 years of service at the Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México (UNAM), and having acquainted myself with most countries in the Americas through international cooperation with business schools, I am now living for the first time in the United States. The UNAM granted me a year-long leave from my teaching and research duties in our Mexico City main campus for a year-long sabbatical at the University of the Incarnate Word (UIW) in San Antonio.

In Latin America's border regions, differences and divisions between the bordering countries exist for various reasons. These include geographical barriers like the Andes Mountains, economic disparities as seen between Haiti and the Dominican Republic, and even tensions exacerbated by allegiances to national soccer teams. As a Mexican residing for the first time in the United States, and more specifically in South Texas, I'm now experiencing a different type of border dynamic. I'm struck more by the connection and blending of cultures and societies, than by tensions or stark differences between the United States and Mexico. The common Latin American perspective of the U.S.A., as a formidable neighbor, or even an opponent, does not mesh with what I'm seeing here.

The reality before me is much more complex than the dichotomy often depicted.

Border regions are characterized by shared and fluid societal elements that coexist with the more static symbols and official icons, such as anthems and flags, that celebrate and preserve specific national identities. The case of the U.S.-Mexico borderlands is no exception, but the strong fluidity that defines this border's reality has for centuries been overshadowed by ideas, representations and even laws that impose distinct identities, loyalties and language. The dominant historical narratives, for example, have emphasized and reinforced the differences, rather than the close relationships, between the two neighboring nations. We clearly see this in Mexican official history, which underlines Mexico's tensions with its northern neighbor, often celebrating how Mexican heroes have resisted U.S. hegemony. It is worth recalling, however, that in Mexico's deeper historical archives we find ample evidence and stories of emblematic exiles who found in the United States the freedom to effect significant change for their Mexican homeland. Figures like Francisco Madero, Benito Juárez, and Juan O'Gorman not only transformed their families' lives but impacted Mexican society and history at large while living in the United States. Similarly, countless individuals, away from the spotlight and their original homeland of Mexico, contribute to the evolving Mexican family life and the broader borderland culture, economy, and political landscape.



About the Author



Tomás Rosales Mendieta is a Professor of Finance and Business Ethics at Mexico's renowned UNAM (Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México). He held the post of Executive Secretary of ALAFEC (Asociación Latinoamericana de Facultades y Escuelas de Contaduría y Administración / Latin American Association of Accounting and Administration Colleges and Schools) and was a member of the UNAM's Comisión de Honor (Commission of Honor) and Comisión de Legislación (Legislative Commission). He is a doctoral candidate specializing in administration sciences and his research has focused on anti-corruption practices and non-financial management metrics. His sabbatical at UIW is for the purpose of advancing his studies of the case method, the reality of the border from a financial perspective, and the culture of the Texas-Mexico border.

Gabriel T. Saxton-Ruiz is Professor of Latin American Literature & Culture at the University of the Incarnate Word. His extensive experience traveling and working abroad has led him to place an emphasis on intercultural dialogue in his teaching, research, and service. His research interests include contemporary Latin American literature, cultural gastronomy, ecocriticism and representations of violence in various types of cultural productions. In addition to his research and teaching, Dr. Saxton-Ruiz has found time to complete a number of literary translations, including the recently published anthology of Peruvian fiction,