

RELIGION AND SOCIAL JUSTICE FOR IMMIGRANTS. Edited by Pierrette Hondagneu-Sotelo. Rutgers University Press 2007. Pp. xii +242 (including index). Paper. \$24.95. ISBN: 0-813-53909-9.

When one becomes a hedgehog, as so many academics do, one digs deeply into one's own field, often without realizing how closely allied other fields are, and how overlapping or interlocking comprehensive fields of study have become. As an immigration scholar and law professor, I read deeply in law and the legal regimes that govern immigration and nationality law and its various sub-fields: refugee law, human rights, international law (and its kissing cousin, comparative law), administrative law, constitutional law, and, increasingly, national security law. As if these are not complex enough, there are the various social sciences that further define this field of study: history, political science, economics, and sociology.

As I read *Religion and Social Justice for Immigrants*, I had a *sacre-bleu*, forehead-slapping moment of recognition (akin to that of the television sales pitch for V-8 tomato juice, the one my nieces and nephews make fun of). Of course, religious studies and theology discourse should mark and inform this field. I felt particularly embarrassed by this late-in-life recognition, especially as I studied for eight years to become a Catholic priest, leaving theological studies after high school and college seminary.

Adding further to the embarrassment is that my own personal history contains the spores of these immigration and religion intersections. My father was Mexican American and staunchly Roman Catholic, while my mother was born in Mississippi and raised Baptist. She converted to Catholicism, which, along with her parents' objections to my father's race, caused a rift with her family that was never healed. When she died and my father remarried, he married a woman who was born in Brazil of Presbyterian ministers from the United States, and has held a position as an Elder in her faith. Although we were raised Catholic, I have a brother who is a Baptist minister with a Los Angeles immigrant ministry, and a sister who has come later in life to believe our family is Jewish (crypto Jewish, to be precise, notwithstanding my white, Baptist mother from Yazoo City), and who has moved her family to Israel. My own DNA combines immigration and religion, in a way that is still manifesting itself.

As it happens, I even know several of the authors in this text, and have met others in professional settings, and know the written work of still others, but I had not fully comprehended how we were all mining the same terrain here. Even the most hedgehog-ish immigration law professors know the sociological contributions made to the field, and all the major casebooks cite extensively from this stream. Therefore, I was pleased to have this book, and to see the extent to which this particular sub-genre is flourishing. For example, at least six different and new datasets are examined in this collection, and while it shows internal references as recent as 2006, it is clearly as fresh as these collections can be, given publication lags.

The introductory chapter is by the editor, Pierrette Hondagneu-Sotelo, "Religion and a Standpoint Theory of Immigrant Social Justice," where she sets out the organizing principles of the project:

This volume emphasizes the specificity of immigrant groups and underscores the ways in which different social locations offer them different standpoints from which to define social justice. . . . Taken together, these chapters begin to reveal that what is at work today in the United States is a large coterie of faith-based organizations, values, and coalitions that constitute a landscape of religion working for immigrant social justice. Some groups work in consortiums and coalitions, while others are dispersed and relatively untethered to similar efforts. But together they constitute an important part of the social and political context of contemporary immigration. (15)

Indeed, this volume's greatest contribution is its wide-ranging references to the plethora of immigrant groups and the various mediating organizations that attract and serve the sojourners that make their way to this country. While some of these groups come in search of religious freedom, a curiously underplayed theme in the volume, many who do arrive, whether in legal or unauthorized fashion, find their way to religious communities and ethnic organizations whose purposes are to integrate the immigrants and facilitate their Americanization/naturalization.

Several case studies of discrete immigrant populations form the core of this book, including Asians generally (Janelle Wong and Jane Naomi Iwamura, "The Moral Minority: Race, Religion, and Conservative Politics in Asian America"), Vietnamese (Janet Hoskins, "Caodai Exiles and Redemption: A New Vietnamese Religion's Struggle for Identity"), Muslims, including African American converts to Islam (Karen Leonard, "Finding Places in the Nation: Immigrant and

Indigenous Muslims in America”), and Latinos, Latinos everywhere (Joseph M. Palacios, “Bringing Mexican Immigrants into American Faith-Based Social Justice and Civic Cultures”; Jacqueline Maria Hagan, “The Church vs. The State: Borders, Migrants, and Human Rights”; Cecilia Menjívar, “Serving Christ in the Borderlands: Faith Workers Respond to Border Violence”; Hondagneu-Sotelo, Genelle Gaudinez, and Hector Lara, “Religious Reenactment on the Line: A Genealogy of Political Religious Hybridity”). The other chapters incorporate ethnic data or case studies into their narratives, as the example of undocumented Mexican and Cambodian tenants in Russell Jeung’s “Faith-Based, Multiethnic Tenant Organizing: The Oak Park Story”; various multi-faith and inter-ethnic group refugee resettlement organizations in Stephanie J. Nawyn’s “Welcoming the Stranger: Constructing an Interfaith Ethic of Refuge”; and the largely Latino and Haitian refugee resettlement issues addressed by Margarita Mooney in “The Catholic Church’s Institutional Responses to Immigration: From Supranational to Local Engagement.”

These are fascinating pieces of the larger puzzle, each approaching the overall issue differently and in an interesting way. The “Genealogy” chapter, largely about Mexican (and Filipino) religious rituals, shows the transcendent religious symbolism in the Mexican ritual of *Posadas*, the Advent/pre-Christmas reenactment of the pregnant Mary and Joseph being turned away at the inn, with only the humble manger available to them. I have attended *Posadas* holiday ceremonies in my native Santa Fe, New Mexico for nearly fifty years, and concede that I had never considered them in the context of immigration, rendering another *sacre-bleu* slap in the forehead for me. I had connected such rituals more with *peregrinos*, or pilgrimages to sacred places, such as the Chimayo Chapel, Lourdes, Fatima, Tepeyac, or other locations. I will never freeze in the night again, singing the Spanish entreaties to let us in, without thinking through the now-obvious symbolism of the undocumented.

It is already difficult to envision my native New Mexico’s desert terrain without thinking of the manner in which immigrants die in those same arid places, seeking to evade the militarization of the border in their sojourn to El Norte. Cecilia Menjívar’s heart-wrenching exposé of church and political groups setting out water bottles in the desert, only to discover that some restrictionist groups in all likelihood had sabotaged the bottles, is instructive and chilling; the lawyer in me cries out that legal actions should be undertaken for these acts of border violence. And I had never heard of the Caodai faith, born in Indochina before the

French occupation, and knew little of the various political incorporation developments, especially the more conservative turn of various Asian religious groups, as chronicled by Wong and Iwamura. Any careful reader of this text will learn a great deal about the extraordinary landscape of immigrants and refugees to the United States. Read them and weep, for the most part.

As in any collection, with the broad range of writers and viewpoints, and varying degrees of quality, there is a need for more careful editing and different data should be more rigorously checked: the authors, for example, suggest that Miami, Los Angeles and New York City are the three cities in the United States that are over fifty percent foreign-born, without any citations. (9) However, MPI and American Community Survey data show that no U.S. metropolitan area exceeds fifty percent foreign-born residents (and at 36.5%, Miami is the highest).¹ In addition, one respondent is cited authoritatively as saying: “There are thirteen million refugees in the world and sorrowfully we let in 22,000.” (149) This remark does not indicate which year was being referenced, but it is widely off the mark in almost every recent year. In fact, 41,150 refugees were admitted in 2006, and another 26,113 were also admitted as asylum-seekers.² Also in 2006, 216,454 persons who earlier had entered as refugees or asylum seekers gained permanent resident status.³

There are surely grounds, in fact, many grounds, to criticize U.S. immigration and refugee policy, but doing so requires more precision than is the case here. Another author references the “Luce-Celler bill of 1948,” which was actually the Luce-Cellar immigration legislation of 1946. (52) Giacchino Campese, in “Beyond Ethnic and National Imagination: Toward a Catholic Theology of U.S. Immigration,” characterizes U.S. immigration policy and restrictionist discourse, if I

1. See e.g. *Global City Migration Map*, <http://migrationinformation.org/datahub/gcmm.cfm#map4> (accessed Apr. 15, 2008) (showing no U.S. metropolitan area with 50%). When classified by the share of foreign born in the total state population, the top 10 counties in 2006 were Miami-Dade County, Florida (50.3%); Queens County, New York (48.5%); Hudson County, New Jersey (40.5%); Kings County, New York (37.8%); Santa Clara County, California (36.4%); San Francisco County, California (36.3%); Los Angeles County, California (35.4%); Imperial County, California (32.6%); San Mateo County, California (32.1%); and Bronx County, New York (31.8%). *Id.*

2. See e.g. *Refugee Arrivals by State of Residence, 2006*, Fig. 4, <http://www.migrationinformation.org/USFocus/display.cfm?ID=664#10> (showing U.S. refugee and asylum figures) (accessed June 9, 2008). The 2006 data showed substantial declines from recent figures. *Id.* at Table 2.

3. *2006 Yearbook of Immigration Statistics*, Table 6, cited at T. Alexander Aleinikoff, David A. Martin, Hiroshi Motomura & Maryellen Fullerton, *Immigration and Citizenship, Process and Policy* 307 (6th ed., Thomson-West 2008).

understand his point, as “this cover-up.” (180) Now, I am as inclined to point to the shooters on the grassy knoll as anyone, and regularly cite genuine examples of government perfidy in this field, but his point is made in a rambling discourse that adds heat, but no light, to the subject. And Joseph Palacios notes (his footnote 8) that he “could find no written theological or pastoral works related to [Our Lady of] Guadalupe social construction.” (90) Yet, there are nearly ten books and comprehensive articles on the Virgin of Guadalupe, in all her manifestations, including the recent dustup in Santa Fe over the painting of the Virgin as a *chola* in a bikini, suggesting that it remains a sensitive subject for many Mexican and Mexican American Catholics, especially those with no sense of irony.⁴

Any volume will have high and low points, and this project has many more of the former than it does the latter. I hope that if these areas of religion and immigration do continue to provoke scholarship and inquiry, a more convincing *raison d’etre* will be advanced. While immigration is one progressive set of activities, not all immigration-related church activities are progressive, and the list of concerns can cut in several directions. One need only think of the role of the Catholic Church in prohibiting Democrat politicians from receiving Holy Communion depending upon their votes on family planning and abortion, or recent efforts to evangelize based upon environmental issues. What would Jesus do about pollution-tax credits? About the death penalty? About U.S. diplomatic and economic policy in post-Fidel Castro Cuba? It is clear that much more theorizing and scholarship needs to be done on the longstanding historical role of religion in civic affairs, including the crucial issue of immigration and refugee politics and policies. The Hondagneu-Sotelo volume will be a useful and thorough starting place for this welcome and important

4. For a recent story on *Guadalupana* art, see Asta Kuusinen, *Ojo de la Diosa: Becoming Divine in Delilah Montoya’s Art Photography*, 33 *Aztlán: J. Chicano Stud.* 33 (2008). For a small sampling of books and articles, in English and in Spanish, on the Virgin of Guadalupe, see D.A. Brading, *Mexican Phoenix, Our Lady of Guadalupe: Image and Tradition Across Five Centuries* (Cambridge U. Press 2001); Jose L. Guerrero Rosado, *Los Dos Mundos de un Indio Santo* (Ediciones Cimiento 1991); David M. Herszenhorn, *Mexicans Unite to Honor Their Spiritual Mother* A51 *N.Y. Times* (Dec. 13, 1998); Virgil Elizondo, *Guadalupe, Mother of a New Creation* (Orbis Books 1997); Jacques Lafaye, *Quetzalcoatl and Guadalupe, The Formation of Mexican National Consciousness, 1531-1813* (U. Chi. Press 1976); Timothy Matovina, *Guadalupe and Her Faithful: Latino Catholics in San Antonio, from Colonial Origins to the Present* (Johns Hopkins U. Press 2005); Stafford Poole, *Our Lady of Guadalupe: The Origins and Sources of a Mexican National Symbol, 1531-1797* (U. Ariz. Press 1997); *The Story of Guadalupe: Luis Laso de la Vega’s Huei Tlamahuicoltica of 1649* (Lisa Sousa et al., eds., Stanford U. Press 1998); Ernesto de la Torre Villar y Ramiro Navarro de Anda, *Testimonios Históricos Guadalupanos* (Fondo de Cultura Económica 1982).

discourse.

*Michael A. Olivas**

* William B. Bates Distinguished Chair in Law, University of Houston Law Center, Houston, Texas.