

### ***Explorations in Sights and Sounds***

be read as a dialogue between Chicana scholars' experiences and theoretical debates. *Building With Our Hands* focuses on the necessity for interdisciplinary work that blurs traditional artificial boundaries; but it does not measure up to such expectations. Disciplinary boundaries are not displaced, even though theoretical debates about the applicability of non-Chicano theories (French feminist theory, psychoanalysis, Marxism, etc.) to the Chicana experience are present.

*Building With Our Hands* provides an excellent foundation to understand Chicana/Mexicana experiences. It is a good source for Chicano/a studies, women's studies, history, sociology, and American studies courses. As the name of the anthology indicates, the advancement of Chicana studies is the result of the struggle and sacrifice of many Chicana scholars.

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**Rita Dove, foreword. *Multicultural Voices*. (Glenview, IL: ScottForesman, 1995) 496 pp., \$15.00 cloth.**

*Multicultural Voices* gathers together an impressive array of writers and writings in a textbook aimed at secondary school readers. The book not only includes several of the more obvious and well-known authors—Toni Morrison, Louise Erdrich, and Amy Tan, to name a few—but also anthologizes a number of younger and less widely known writers whose contributions are equally provocative. While the bulk of the selections are either short stories or excerpts from novels (Zora Neale Hurston's *Their Eyes Were Watching God* and Rudolfo Anaya's *Bless Me, Ultima* are among those excerpted), the editors have also selected poetry, essays, and one short play, Denise Chavez's *The Flying Tortilla Man*. Even though everyone will be able to think of a favorite author who is *not* represented (where is Amiri Baraka?), the range and quality of the book's selections will make it a valuable classroom resource.

The texts here have been well-chosen for an adolescent audience; they encompass a variety of experiences and attitudes that will be sure to broaden the cultural awareness of any student in an accessible and entertaining way. The marginal "culture notes" help in this regard, despite their unevenness. (John F. Kennedy is the subject of such a note, while the Mexican President Porfirio Diaz is not.) The book also provides useful translations of non-English words in the margins, though I noticed that it tactfully avoided addressing "mierda." Furthermore, teachers will probably want to create their own study questions to replace those in the book, which exhibit the usual mix of acuity and inanity familiar to textbook readers.

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Selections are organized under thematic rubrics—some of which work well ("Image Makers"), others of which don't ("The Crossroads of Culture"?). In fact, the absence of a strong, if only provisional, heuristic scheme for understanding where these works fit in to the literary "mosaic" of the United States marks the book's weakest point. Teachers will probably want (if not need) to devise their own order for teaching these works depending on their own classroom goals. Moreover, teachers will want to be wary of the dangers that a book like *Multicultural Voices* presents. *Multicultural Voices* is far from being anything like an actual literary history of multicultural writing in the United States; such a history would have to reach back to the nineteenth and even eighteenth centuries to include authors such as Phillis Wheatley, William Apess, Frederick Douglass, and Sui Sin Far. With the exception of two representatives of the Harlem Renaissance, this book remains the exclusive domain of post-World War II writers. There are good reasons for such a chronological bias, but the book would be more aptly named "*Contemporary Multicultural Voices*" or "*Multicultural Voices Today*." More important, there would be a danger in an education in English in which students held their "American Literature" textbooks in one hand and their "multicultural" books in the other. The two should not, and cannot, be so easily separated.

These "multicultural" voices, after all, continually speak to more popular, more "mainstream," ones. It is no accident that John Wayne, Fred Astaire, and Johnny Carson all make appearances in this volume. These works engage with our semiotically saturated culture to help us understand what the messages that bombard students (and teachers) daily might mean—and toward learning how to broadcast viable alternatives. They help us, in other words, to learn about the difference between who we are and what others imagine us to be, and about the impossibility of completely disentangling the two. Such goals speak to the import of literature in a media-soaked age—to make students literate enough to read the world around them—and to the necessity of integrating a book like *Multicultural Voices* into the English classroom.

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**Peter Eichstaedt. *If You Poison Us: Uranium and Native Americans*. (Santa Fe, NM: Red Crane Books, 1994) 263 pp., \$19.95 cloth.**

"The history of our nation's relations with American Indians is one of ignorance, indifference, exploitation and broken promises." This statement opens journalist Peter Eichstaedt's book, *If You Poison Us: Uranium and Native Americans*, an examination of this abusive history supplemented with personal interviews, government documents, and a detailed