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Dolph Briscoe: My Life in Texas Ranching and Politics
(review)

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a limiting working-class economy as the elements defining Mexican-American assimilation. The sociologists recognize education as the lynchpin dictating the future for Mexican Americans; they present educational reform as the most salient route for reversing the negative trend.

The highest achievement of this project is the design of the study. Telles and Ortíz took full advantage of the opportunities left them by original MASP researchers and accumulated myriad data that will prove useful to a variety of researchers. Their analysis is convincing as well. Certainly Mexican Americans are better positioned than they were in the 1960s; however, the stalled progress and regression between generational assimilation elucidates the problematic characterization within traditional modes. The authors invite debate in their policy proposals by favoring education restructuring over immigration or economic reform, but the ability of improved educational quality to positively affect Mexican-American assimilation is more than plausible. Regardless of any favored prescription, *Generations of Exclusion* provides a much improved analytical framework for studying Mexican Americans—one that should be considered by all scholars of contemporary United States society.

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Dolph Briscoe: My Life in Texas Ranching and Politics. By Dolph Briscoe, as told to Don Carleton. (Austin: Center for American History, 2008. Pp. 296. Illustrations, index. ISBN 9780976669722, \$29.95 cloth.)

“It was my honor and privilege to serve as the governor of Texas for six wonderful years” (1). This quote is a fitting opening for Dolph Briscoe’s autobiography. In this work, the former governor of Texas relates his life experiences to Don Carleton through a series of interviews conducted over an eight-year span. The humble Briscoe, according to Carleton, was driven to produce an autobiography out of his sense of responsibility to and appreciation for Texas history. In many ways, Briscoe was a transitional figure in the Texas cattle industry and in Texas politics. His political influences ranged from Uvalde’s prickly John Nance Garner to Sam Rayburn, “Cactus” Jack’s erstwhile protégé. Entering Texas politics in the 1950s, Briscoe helped guide a new, more modern Texas through the good and bad times of the post-World War II era.

Driven by a life-long desire to serve as governor of Texas, Briscoe finally realized this dream with his victory in the gubernatorial election of 1972. Elected in the wake of the Sharpstown Scandal, Briscoe considered it his duty to restore public faith to the governorship, and his steady and deliberate—if unspectacular—leadership provided the trustworthy guiding force that Texas needed. Re-elected in 1974, Briscoe served until defeated by a better organized and resurgent Republican Party in 1978. Returning to private life, Briscoe managed one of the largest cattle operations in the state while amassing a personal business fortune, all the while focusing on the well-being of his beloved family and devoting much of his fortune to various philanthropic efforts in Texas.

Unlike many autobiographies, Briscoe’s does not offer self-serving explana-

tions for his accomplishments and failures. Briscoe is refreshingly candid about his own insecurities, and he recognizes that his personal faults were often the cause of his setbacks. Perhaps the strongest aspect of this work is that it provides a delightful look at the inner-workings of mid-century Texas politics as practiced by giants like Garner, Rayburn, and Lyndon Johnson. The photos chosen for this book brilliantly capture the moods and personalities of Texas politicians throughout the era. Occasionally, the editing of the interviews interrupts the natural flow of Briscoe's narrative, but a very down-to-earth, honest, and humble Briscoe still emerges. A man of high integrity who held a genuine appreciation for the judgment and wisdom of the Texans whom he served, Briscoe is not typically included in the pantheon of important Texan leaders. Carleton must be commended for his efforts to bring Dolph Briscoe's story to the public's attention.

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Colonias in Arizona and New Mexico: Border Poverty and Community Development Solutions. By Adrian X. Esparza and Angela J. Donelson. (Tuscon: The University of Arizona Press, 2008. Pp. 208. Illustrations, tables, references. ISBN 978081652, \$19.95 paper.)

"*Colonias.*" The word conjures stereotypical (but not always accurate) images of rural shanty-towns along the United States-Mexican border where ethnic minorities of questionable citizenship status, trapped in the vicious cycle of poverty and underemployment, exist in substandard housing, lacking even the basic essential services of clean water, indoor plumbing, electricity, and other standard infrastructure most Americans take for granted. Co-authors Adrian Esparza and Angela Donelson wrote this book to raise awareness of the almost half a million people who dwell in over two hundred officially recognized *colonias* in Arizona and New Mexico. (The authors concentrate on *colonias* in Arizona and New Mexico because, they claim, extensive literature already exists for *colonias* in Texas and California. They suggest Texas is a more progressive example of where state and federal governments and non-governmental entities have been more proactive to alleviate some of the worst situations—albeit with the recognition that much remains to be done). The authors hope readers will be motivated to help those inhabiting the poor, isolated communities in southern Arizona and New Mexico to improve their quality of life.

Esparza and Donelson claim the Arizona/New Mexico region's distinctive history is important to understanding its development, but offer only a cursory and selective overview of the region's history from the Spanish conquest to the present. They highlight hostile indigenous populations and geographical challenges that prevented this region from being settled as effectively and profitably as California and Texas. For Esparza and Donelson, the most pivotal events on either side of the border having significant impact on the growth and ethnic makeup of the Arizona and New Mexico *colonias* include two devaluations of the Mexican currency in the last thirty years, and shifting U.S. immigration policies and enforcement.