

1. Empires

In the opening chapter titled "Empires," the author reflects on the stories of empire and injustice that shape the experiences of their children and the Latino community in the United States. Growing up in the United States, children are immersed in tales of powerful empires, often framed as heroic struggles against oppressive forces. These stories, whether told through movies or books, tap into a collective memory of migration and cultural erasure that resonates with the experiences of marginalized groups, particularly Latinos, in America.

The author illustrates how the history of European conquests, racial ideologies, and forced migrations have shaped the Latino identity in the U.S. Tales of historical events, such as the arrival of enslaved Africans or the U.S. government's treatment of Indigenous peoples, become amalgamated into popular culture, distilling complex histories into digestible narratives that often overlook the harsh truths of colonialism.

In the context of Los Angeles, a city largely defined by its Latino population, the author examines how the film industry capitalizes on these narratives, shaping perceptions of Latino identity in popular media. The characterizations often fail to reflect reality and reinforce stereotypes, promoting a narrow understanding of Latino cultures and histories.

As the chapter progresses, the author connects the physical barriers faced by Latino families, such as the U.S.-Mexico border, to the larger imperial forces at play. The imagined identity imposed from outside narratives creates a deep sense of melancholy and fear among Latino communities—the constant threat of deportation and separation from family is ever-present.

The narrative also touches on personal stories, showcasing the emotional weight of migration and the struggles for dignity within the framework of an empire. The author shares poignant anecdotes from students, revealing how their families' histories are punctuated by loss, trauma, and resilience.

Overall, the chapter argues that the real experiences of Latino people in America are overshadowed by the simplified, often romanticized accounts of empire in mainstream media. The truth of their existence is a complex interplay of struggle, resilience, and the quest for belonging within an empire that seeks to render them invisible.