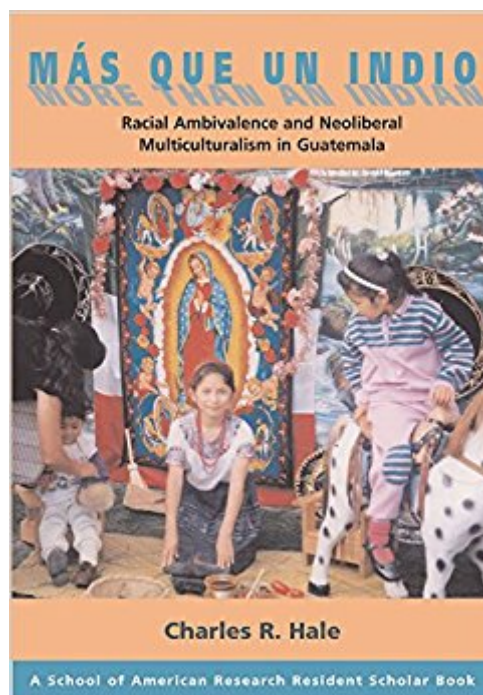




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Mas Que Un Indio (More Than An Indian): Racial Ambivalence And The Paradox Of Neoliberal Multiculturalism In Guatemala



Synopsis

Más que un indio: “More than an Indian.” Two decades ago, the phrase expressed a common-sense prescription for upward mobility in a racist society: to better themselves, Indians had to abandon their culture and identity. Ironically, today it captures the predicament of ladinos, members of Guatemala’s dominant culture. In the 1990s, Maya people organized in diverse ways to challenge racism and achieve basic rights. They achieved a broad recognition of their cultural rights during the same time that neoliberal economic reforms carried the day. The resulting “neoliberal multiculturalism” has opened important spaces for indigenous empowerment while recreating Guatemala’s racial hierarchy. The author examines this paradox through the eyes of provincial ladinos, who show growing respect for indigenous culture and support for equality while harboring deep anxieties about the prospect of Maya ascendancy. Their racial ambivalence embodies a desire to be free of racism without ceasing to benefit from ingrained racial privilege, epitomized by the belief that ladinos are *más que un indio*. This deeply researched and sensitively rendered study raises troubling questions about the contradictions of anti-racist politics and the limits of multiculturalism in Guatemala and, by implication, other countries in the midst of similar reform projects.

Book Information

Paperback: 304 pages

Publisher: School for Advanced Research Press; illustrated edition edition (July 1, 2006)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 1930618603

ISBN-13: 978-1930618602

Product Dimensions: 7 x 0.8 x 9.8 inches

Shipping Weight: 1.1 pounds (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 5.0 out of 5 stars 1 customer review

Best Sellers Rank: #1,303,539 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #98 in [Books > History > Americas > Central America > Guatemala](#) #215 in [Books > History > Ancient Civilizations > Mayan](#) #1146 in [Books > Textbooks > Humanities > History > Latin America](#)

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In *Más que un indio* [Charles] Hale...argues in favor of reintroducing the concept of race as a way of capturing intergroup or interethnic relations in Guatemala.... While Hale compares his work to the research and writing on whiteness in the United States, he misses the opportunity, in my view, to

make a more thoroughgoing comparison between the politics of race in Guatemala and the United States, a rhetorical approach which would make this book more interesting to its North American readers. --Ron Loewe, Reviews in Anthropology, vol. 38, issue 3, 2009

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