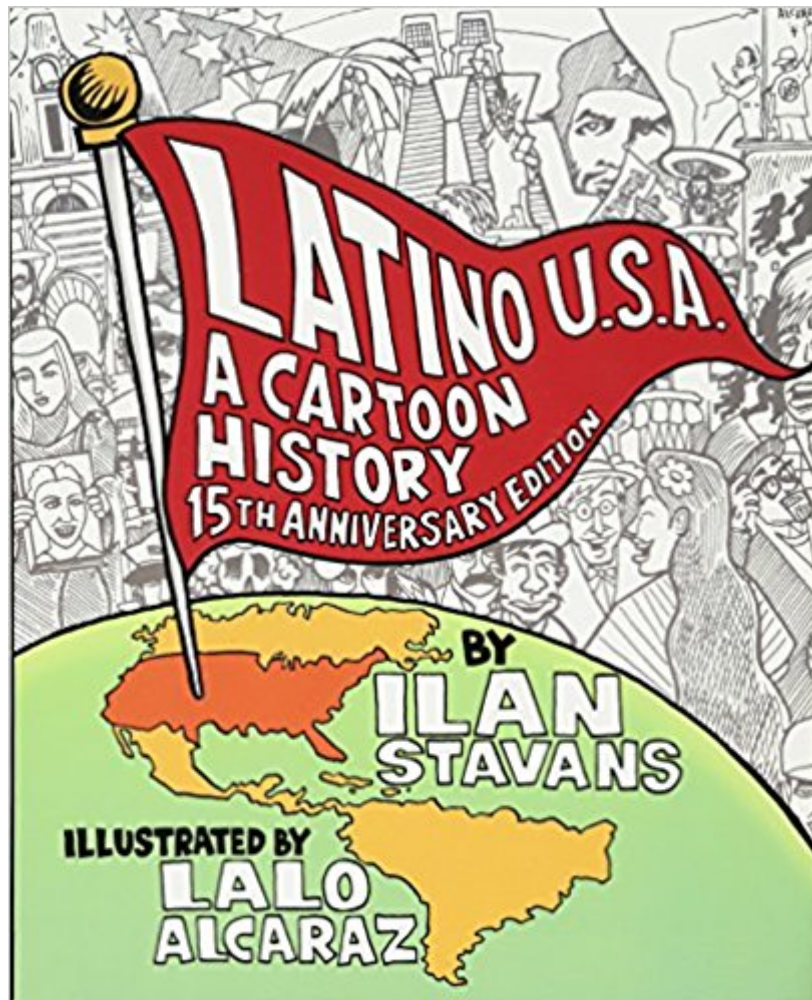


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# Latino USA, Revised Edition: A Cartoon History



## Synopsis

Latino USA represents the culmination of Ilan Stavans' lifelong determination to meet the challenges of capturing the joys, nuances, and multiple dimensions of Latino culture within the context of the English language. In this cartoon history of Latinos, Stavans also seeks to combine the solemnity of so-called serious literature and history with the inherently theatrical and humorous nature of the comics. Stavans represents Hispanic civilization as a fiesta of types, archetypes, and stereotypes. These multiple, at times contradictory voices, each narrating various episodes of Latino history from a unique perspective, combine to create a carnivalesque rhythm, which is democratic and impartial. Latino USA, like the history it so entertainingly relates, is a dazzling kaleidoscope of irreverence, wit, subversion, anarchy, politics, humanism, celebration, and serious and responsible history."

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

If it's a comic book, then it can't be a work of serious scholarship, right? Wrong. Ilan Stavans, a literary scholar and cultural historian, teams up with Chicano artist Lalo Alcaraz to craft an endlessly entertaining but painstakingly researched history of Latinos--also called Latin Americans and Hispanics, and taking in peoples from all over the Spanish-speaking world--in the United States. Stavans's text covers the ground from avocados to zoot suits, touching on such matters as the Puerto Rican independence movement, the Mexican American War, the Marielito flotilla, and the ongoing struggle for civil rights throughout the hemisphere. Stavans has great fun, it's clear, twitting

received wisdom. He observes, for instance, that Mexico's "Ni<sup>Ñ</sup>f<sup>Â</sup> os Heroes" may be an invention of folklore, and wryly remarks that "nationalism turns egotism into an ideology." Alcaraz has just as much fun, subversively borrowing stock figures such as the toucan (a symbol in much Latin American literature) and the skeleton to serve as a kind of ironic Greek chorus. But author and illustrator also fulfill an earnestly undertaken mission: namely, in Stavans's words, to "represent Hispanic civilization as a fiesta of types, archetypes, and stereotypes" and to tell its story from many points of view. In this they succeed admirably, and Latino U.S.A. is required reading for anyone interested in democratic, inclusive historical writing. --Gregory McNamee --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

". . . Latino's kaleidoscopic perspective bubbles with an irreverent mix of Latin politics, wit, self-reference and sincerity." -- San Antonio Express-News [September 1, 2000]" . . . an amusing comic book that outlines the salient features of U.S. Latino history." -- Houston Chronicle [November 1, 2000]"....a cartoon history for everyone: ...witty and inviting." -- Kirkus Reviews [October 1, 2000]"Latino USA explores these and similarly serious questions in entertaining cartoon form." -- Austin American-Statesman [October 30,"Read this primer if you don't want to be left out." -- The --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

My joy at hearing about a cartoon history of Latinos (not, you may notice, Latinas or even Latina/os) illustrated by Lalo Alcaraz was tempered only slightly by hearing the editor (not, I'm sorry Mr Stavans, the author) was self-styled Mexican kitsch authority Ilan Stavans. "A possible resource for teaching!" I thought. Reading the book, however, was such a great disappointment that I doubt it's going to make the cut for the classroom. Without denigrating at all Lalo Alcaraz' art, the book fails on several levels, not the least of which is originality. The first question I asked myself was "Who was this written for?" The introduction to what could have been a revolutionary book seems to veer between being too clever for its own good and winking in the direction of academics, intimating somehow that "comics" are a kind of Latino cultural icon that is kitschy and therefore useful for transmitting ideas. Stavans hasn't done much work on cartoons or comics, or the notion that cartoonish comic art is more (or less) appropriate to represent Latino history would have been more informed. Alcaraz' talent rises above this rather mediocre beginning and keeps the reader amused, even while Stavans (as a cartoon Mini-Me) keeps popping up exclaiming the inevitability of historical bias, insisting on the futility of "truth" in history, and generally sounding defensive. Instead of acknowledging the real social and cultural impact of how history has been and gets transmitted,

Stavans seems to want to exist in an academic, vague vacuum, which he may believe protects him or makes him appear to be unbiased-- it does neither. Even some of us academics know that. More troubling, and the key to a two-star review of this text, the book cribs horribly its history from better texts, the most particular offenses being those against the Elizabeth Martinez-edited "500 Years of Chicano History". Several images (MANY images) are culled from that fine picture/word text-- somewhat surprisingly, since Alcaraz has talent galore. Martinez' book, far more complex in its use of images and commentary, should be read before this cartoon history. Also at stake is Stavans' perception of historical importance. We know from the text he loves Richard Rodriguez, but when we finally get to the real (non-idealized) Latinas, we get a few of them drawn on one page, and a digression all too brief of their importance. In what way was this book supposed to educate, inform, or revolutionize when it remakes history in the pattern of most history books before it? Reread Acuna's "Occupied America" and "500 Years" if you'd like to see history-as-usual turned on its head. A book which perhaps would have been better if left to Alcaraz alone, Latino USA trips over itself and its editor's need to academize and, ironically, oversimplify in trying for an audience (ANY audience). Next time, aim for the Academy, Mr. Stavans-- it deserves the hit better than Latinas and Latinos who are still looking for the past to make sense of the present and prepare for the future. Meanwhile, I'll keep reading L.A. Cucaracha.

A great way to learn the American History that your educators refused to cover. This book covers important parts of American History involving both Hispanics and Latin@s. While they don't go over every single detail that happens, they do cover enough to give you the motivation to go out and learn more about the other side of America. Here are the chapters of the book, as well as some of my favorite topics mentioned within them:

P1: Conquest and Exploration

1492-1890

- The cruelties of the Holy Church
- Forget the Alamo
- The Guadalupe Hidalgo Treaty
- Border bylaws and outlaws

P2: Into the Cauldron 1891-1957

- Our good neighbor policy
- Miguel Antonio Otero rules
- Viva Zapata!
- Hispanophobia: The Movie

P3: Upheaval 1958-1977

- Here comes Fidel Castro
- Bilingual Education is born
- Rodolfo "Corky" Gonzalez also raises the myth of Aztlan
- Cesar Chavez's hunger
- Triumphs and Tribulations of the Chicano Movement

P4: In Search of a Mainstream 1978-1998

- Central America on fire!
- Comprendes Espaol? The English only movement
- Bilingual Nation

P5: Welcome to Gringolandia 1998-Present

(tomorrow) *Act of Fear* â *Act of Patriotism and its Discontents* â *Act of Dreamers*  
*Act of Fear* â *Act of The making of Latino USA* â *Act of Fear and Racial profiling in Arizona*  
These topics and more are covered in the book. Anyone and everyone who is a part of, or wants to learn more about, Hispanic/Latin@ culture should go out and buy this book!

Great resource for my high school literature class. I need to explain the historical context of the literature and this is a fun way to do it!

As a history teacher, I find graphic re-tellings to be a fun and easier way for students to grasp the concepts I cover. I was initially excited about this book, and I do still believe it to have merit for this purpose ... so it's on the bookshelf in my classroom. However, there are a number of instances of oversimplified, stereotyped caricatures of native peoples especially. This fact has made me incredibly uncomfortable with using this book as part of my lesson plans, which had been my initial purpose in buying it.

I had to buy this book for an english class and i really didn't think much of it because i was required to read it. after finishing it i can tell you i won't be selling it back. it really is a great book and i think the author does a great job of pretty much summarizing the history of latinos in the US. great read. i would recommend to anyone.

The mezcla of the cartoons of Lalo Alcaraz (of the comic strip La Cucaracha) and the scholarship of Ilan Stavans creates a lively and informative overview of the history of US Latinos, cleverly incorporating traditional Latino theatrical characters and symbols as the storytellers. The book is great fun to read; its format makes it accessible to readers of all ages, and anyone fuzzy about the role Latinos have played in US history and culture during the past 500 years or so should RUSH to buy it.

I'm in the "Ilan Stavans Fan Club," so I purchase all his stuff, and I have not been disappointed yet.

Very informative, and entertaining. Pair it with Donghi's Contemporary History of Latin America, They complement each other very well...

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