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Latinas on the Border and La Vista Grande: The Common Ground of Displacements and Breakthroughs

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ABSTRACT

This article compares the responses to globalization by a Latina entrepreneur and a Latina labor advocate in the border city of El Paso, Texas. The two cases illustrate contrasting, yet inevitably related responses to the polarization generated by the ongoing process of international economic integration. As the local economy of that city becomes more immediately linked to global markets, business opportunities for new entrepreneurs coincide with massive displacement of garment workers, most of whom are Latinas. This article, beyond rigid ideological demarcations or automatic denunciations, uses ethnographic descriptions to contextualize the two involvements in reference to the sweeping magnitude of ongoing changes. The changes concern new economic parameters, suggesting class and gender reformulations as well as new avenues for local interventions.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Victor Ortiz is an assistant professor in the Latin American Studies Program of the University of Illinois at Chicago. He received his Ph.D. in Anthropology from Stanford University in 1993. He assisted in the creation of the database for the Immigration and Law Enforcement Monitoring Project of the American Friends Service Committee. Dr. Ortiz is currently working on the completion of a 10-year longitudinal study of the socio-political impacts of the economic integration of Mexico and the United States in El Paso. His current research explores the socio-political dimensions of the "new capitalism" regarding technology and corporate innovations. Dr. Ortiz has been recognized with a Rockefeller Post-Doctoral Fellowship and a Great Cities Faculty Fellowship in recent years.