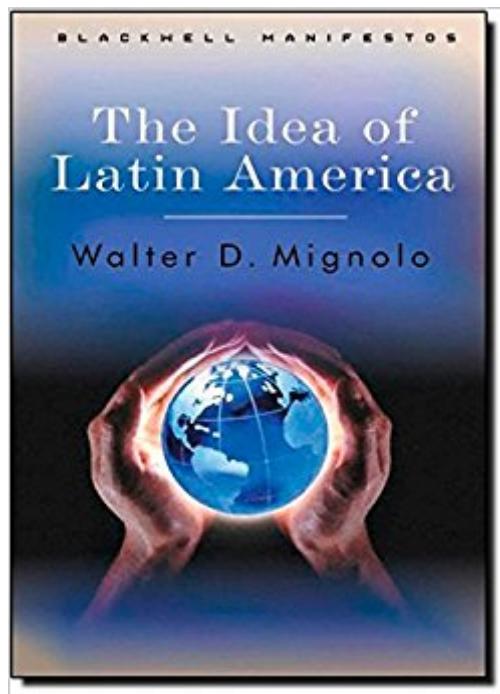


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The Idea Of Latin America



Synopsis

The Idea of Latin America is a geo-political manifesto which insists on the need to leave behind an idea which belonged to the nation-building mentality of nineteenth-century Europe. Charts the history of the concept of Latin America from its emergence in Europe in the second half of the nineteenth century through various permutations to the present day. Asks what is at stake in the survival of an idea which subdivides the Americas. Reinstates the indigenous peoples and migrations excluded by the image of a homogenous Latin America with defined borders. Insists on the pressing need to leave behind an idea which belonged to the nation-building mentality of nineteenth-century Europe.

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Customer Reviews

This is a self-consciously polemical critique of the idea of "Latin" America from an anti-neoliberal, pro-indigenous standpoint. Mignolo's "manifesto" is a welcome addition to the field of Latin American studies and a helpful condensation of his major scholarly work, including *The Darker Side of the Renaissance* (1995) and *Local Histories/Global Designs* (2000). The book is divided into three chapters. Chapters 1 and 2 outline Mignolo's understanding of the world-system of modernity/coloniality, which, in the Americas since the sixteenth century, paved the way for colonial domination over indigenous and black communities. The third chapter surveys various forms of resistance to the continuing logic of modernity/coloniality, including indigenous social movements,

the World Social Forum, and the Zapatistas in Mexico. In many ways this chapter is the heart of Mignolo's book, forcefully articulating as it does the need to decolonize not simply territories and resources but knowledge itself -- the core beliefs and ways of seeing the world that inform our ethical relation to other human beings. Missing from Mignolo's account is any consideration of how indigenous intellectuals (whom he supports, over and against Eurocentric, modern/colonial intellectuals) might not exactly "represent" the will of the communities they come from. He too readily accepts that these intellectuals speak the voice of "the people." I appreciate Mignolo's desire to critique Western epistemology and colonial regimes of knowledge, but I don't think he questions the category of "intellectual work" enough, even in indigenous contexts. A more ethnographic approach to indigenous intellectual work might have helped his account here. Still, this is an accessible and engaging summary of major problems in the professional study of "Latin" America. Recommended reading for Latin American scholars and transnational activists alike.

Well written, interesting, and a thoughtful exploration of the creation of Latin America, race, and post-colonial theory.

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