

Mi Casa Es Su Casa?: Girlhood and the Geopolitics of Home

Where is the line between the United States and Mexico? Chicana feminist poet Pat Mora and her daughter Libby Martinez tackle this question in *I Pledge Allegiance* (2014), a children's book that pictures the United States as a homeplace for migrants. The social actor in this imagined community is Libby, a young girl of Mexican descent. Libby fluidly navigates the intimate and institutional spaces where children live and learn to be citizens, and her journey bridges underrepresented migration histories from the U.S.-Mexico borderlands with contemporary migration experiences that we see on the news. By placing Libby in normative childhood spaces and allowing her to enter a legislative (i.e. adult) space, Mora and Martinez draw upon historic associations between "the child" and "the nation" while disrupting images of American citizenship as prototypically white, adult, and male. My paper draws upon Chicana feminist theory, girlhood studies, and scholarship on children's geographies to argue that this seemingly simplistic patriotic story performs subversive geopolitical work. By sharing U.S. history via one family's migration story, the authors craft a creative response to pervasive anti-Mexican/anti-Mexican-American/anti-Latinx rhetoric while stretching readers' perceptions of borders and our national community. The story—which resonates with contentious debates around immigration, unaccompanied child migrants, DACA recipients, and the Trump administration's recent policy of separating families at the border—proves to be more than a sentimental melting pot narrative. *I Pledge Allegiance* attempts to suture the break caused by colonization. The narrative underscores the intimate geographies between two presumably distinct national communities, and in doing so, presents young readers with a nation that we all can call "home."