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Dianne Walta Hart. *Undocumented in L.A.: An Immigrant's Story.* Wilmington, Del.: Scholarly Resources, 1997. 136 pp. $25.95 (paper), ISBN 978-0-8420-2649-9; $65.00 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-8420-2648-2.

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In the decade after the 1979 triumph of the Sandinista revolution, there was a veritable explosion of books about Nicaragua. Diana Walta Hart wrote one of the best of them, *Thanks to God and the Revolution: The Oral History of a Nicaraguan Family*, which chronicled the story of the Lopez family of Esteli. Now, Hart has given us a sequel. *Undocumented in L.A.: An Immigrant's Story*, follows the Lopezes to Los Angeles, where they are representative of the new wave of immigrants, in many ways unlike their of the turn-of-the-century forerunners.

These are not immigrants for whom the United States is the promised land. These are people seeking temporary respite from the horrors of their homelands, who have every intention of going back. Instead, they join the thousands of urban poor, whose poverty makes every illness and downturn a catastrophe. Their situation is of course, further complicated by having to live in the shadowy, uncertain world of the undocumented worker. Nicaragua becomes a distant dream.

The difficulties that the Lopezes face are all the more poignant because of their feelings of guilt for seeming to have abandoned the Sandinista revolution, to which they maintain loyalty. But the economic chaos that followed the contra war and neo-liberal policies of the Chamorro and Aleman governments left them feeling they had no alternative but to leave.

The Lopezes were not immigrants who believed the streets would be paved with gold. But neither were they prepared for what they found: A new war zone, where rival street gangs and police helicopters seemed more dangerous than contras. An economy where one could find work but gained little for the many hours sacrificed. A place where family seemed to fall apart under the many stresses.

Undocumented in L.A. works best as a companion to *Thanks to God and the Revolution.* One needs to have felt the family's desperation with their lives in embattled Nicaragua to truly feel the irony of their lot in Los Angeles. But *Undocumented in L.A.* is not as compelling as *Thanks to God and the Revolution.* In the first book, Hart let the Lopezes' edited testimony provide the narrative structure. In *Undocumented in L.A.*, Hart's narrative is the main structure of the book, and the family's story loses its immediacy.

Once the Lopezes gave us richly detailed stories about fighting Somoza and trying to build a new Nicaragua. They commented on U.S. policy and how it affected Nicaragua, and on the decisions made by Sandinista leadership. But their stories about the immigrant experience are anecdotal, reflecting their more limited knowledge about the U.S. situation. And while there is little in the way of analysis and understanding from the Lopezes, there is not much more provided by Hart.

The brief foreword about immigration in the United States and slim final chapter, "The Changing Face of Los Angeles," merely whet the appetite for a more in-depth discussion of the ways that this one family's story illustrates patterns of immigration and urban life near the end of the century. Hart has not done the research for *Undocumented in L.A.* that she did for her previous book. While the first book gave us ten pages of endnotes and references to scholarly works, *Undocumented in L.A.* has a smattering of footnotes, almost all making reference to articles in the *Los Angeles Times*.

Nonetheless, this is a book worth reading. The Lopezes' experience was emblematic in Nicaragua and remains so in Los Angeles. Coupled with *Thanks to God and the Revolution*, this book would work beautifully in a class on the Nicaraguan revolution. Paired with more scholarly works, *Undocumented in L.A.* can humanize and illuminate the immigrant experience.

Hart has brought the Lopez family to life on the pages of these two books. The first volume left the reader wondering about their fate. So does the second: Hart leaves the reader with questions about new generations and assimilation. A third book following this family would be most welcome.

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