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Pineros
Latino Labour and the Changing Face of Forestry in the Pacific Northwest
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Preface

In the summer of 2000, before starting my first year as a graduate student at the University of California, Berkeley, I attended Forestry Camp in Plumas County in northern California. For six weeks, I delighted in the smells of Douglas and white fir, lolled in the shadows of enormous sugar pines, measured the height and girth of trees, acquired skills in identifying native plants, and learned about forest management practices. I also saw first-hand the effects of fire on varying forest types and, while attempting to assess forest inventories, experienced the corporal challenges of walking through dense thickets of second- and third-growth stands.

Our class discussions and field trips focused largely on the importance of managing forests for ecosystem health – a departure from decades of managing federal lands for timber – and touched on a variety of techniques ranging from thinning small-diameter trees to introducing controlled burns. At camp, we met with Forest Service employees, loggers, and community members from the nearby town of Quincy, all of whom shared their perspectives on forest management and how it had evolved over time. By the end of summer, I felt confident that I had at least some grasp of the techniques used to maintain healthy forests. Thinning dense forest stands and reducing fuel loads were clearly a part of this process, yet we never witnessed the actual practice of thinning or learned who might be doing this work and how.

Two years later, I chanced upon a collection of oral histories entitled Voices from the Woods, published by the Jefferson Center for Education and Research, a small non-profit run out of Wolf Creek, Oregon. Voices chronicled the experiences of people, many of whom were non-white and immigrants, in their relationships to forest work – collecting mushrooms, harvesting floral greens, or planting trees and thinning dense
underbrush – in Washington, Oregon, and northern California. What astonished me most about these stories was that they represented aspects of forest work and groups of forest workers with whom I was completely unfamiliar. Until that point, the only narratives about forest labour that I had encountered involved the experiences of white, native-born loggers. Were the stories in *Voices in the Woods* an exception?

It has now been nearly a decade since I first heard about non-white immigrants labouring in the woods. Through the course of my research, I have come to learn that Latino immigrants, in particular, are anything but an exception in the forest labour force. Yet the story of how these workers came to “manage” (in the sense of performing manual labour) federal land in much of the Pacific Northwest is largely unknown to the general public – including those who live in the vicinity of these areas. How, then, does one tell a contemporary history that excavates the experiences of workers, many of whom are undocumented and live in the “shadows” of society? Where can one find archival records on such a labour force so as to provide an ostensibly authoritative historical account? In his opening paragraph of *Hard Times*, historian Studs Terkel writes:

This is a memory book, rather than one of hard fact and precise statistic. In recalling an epoch, some thirty, forty years ago, my colleagues experienced pain, in some instances: exhilaration, in others. Often it was a fusing of both. A hesitancy, at first, was followed by a flow of memories: long-ago hurts and small triumphs. Honors and humiliations. There was laughter too.

Are they telling the truth? ... In their rememberings are their truths. The precise fact or the precise date is of small consequence. This is not a lawyer’s brief nor an annotated sociological treatise. It is simply an attempt to get the story of the holocaust known as the Great Depression from an improvised battalion of survivors.

Using oral histories, as Terkel did, is important in and of itself, but it is especially significant when there is not a comprehensive documentary record for different actors. While much of this book is highly annotated, engages sociological and historical scholarship, and draws from archival sources to the extent and availability possible, the “meat” of the story – the labour and immigration experiences of *pineros* and their families – is based on pain, recollection, and perseverance. Their personal narratives humanize and enliven the labour that takes place in the woods and, I hope, will lift the veil for those who care about the management
of public lands. Ultimately, this account is an attempt to draw more systematic attention to immigrant forest workers and the multiple processes that produce their predicament, all with the aim of making the concerns of pineros more central to debates over natural resource management, labour standards, and immigration policy in the United States.
Acknowledgments

This book has benefited greatly from the advice, contributions, and support of countless individuals. First and foremost, I owe a debt of gratitude to the late Beverly Brown. My work would not have been possible without her steadfast encouragement and unwavering vision for social and environmental justice. I am also grateful to my colleagues at the University of California, Berkeley – in particular, Louise Fortmann, Sally Fairfax, and Kim Voss – who believed in the importance of this story from the beginning and who continue to be invaluable mentors. I am thankful to all who helped me during my stay in the Rogue Valley. I am especially grateful for the companionship and support provided by Shareen and Chris Vogel, Victoria and her family, my housemates Marjie and Jenny, Ann and Chris Muth, Katy and Duane Mallams, Terry Tuttle, Mark Chinn, Jose Montenegro, Milo Salgado, and the dedicated students of Club Latino at Rogue Community College.

While conducting my research, I benefited from the scholarship of Cassandra Moseley, who has written extensively on forestry in Oregon and has been generous with her feedback and data; from Vanessa Casanova and Josh McDaniel’s research on forest workers in the US Southeast, which served as an important basis of comparison; from Jeff Romm’s conceptualization of racial and resource reserves; from Jonathan Kusel and Katie Bagby’s institutional work and scholarship on community forestry; and from Sarah Loose’s popular education work on the issue of contingent labour. I also owe intellectual debts to Hal Hartzell Jr., who was prescient in conducting oral histories with forest workers in the 1970s and whose book on the Hoedads remains an essential reference; to Bill Robbins and Richard Rajala, who have examined the lives and livelihoods of loggers and whose work complements my contemporary focus on reforestation workers; and to Erasmo Gamboa’s scholarship on
braceros in the Pacific Northwest. Tom Knudson and Hector Amezcu’a’s series on pineros in the Sacramento Bee was published as I was completing my research, and conversations with Knudson in particular helped me formulate ideas about drawing more public attention to the plight of forest workers. Finally, I am thankful to Dean Pihlstrom, who shared with me his collection of Associated Reforestation Contractors publications and who generously provided feedback on a portion of my manuscript.

Translating my research into book form has been a rewarding and challenging process. My colleagues in environmental analysis at Pitzer College – Paul Faulstich, Melinda Herrold-Menzies, and Susan Phillips – created a stimulating and supportive environment in which to pursue both research and teaching. Char Miller at Pomona College is a rich resource on the history of forestry in the United States, and I am thankful for the advice he provided regarding manuscript revision. I also benefited from the collegial support of faculty in many other disciplines, including my junior faculty compatriots and participants in the women-of-colour lunch group. More generally, I am grateful for Pitzer College’s support for faculty research, which is evident in terms of not only funding opportunities, but also the general tone set from the highest levels down.

Outside of the Claremont Colleges, I have had wonderful mentors who shared timely advice over the years: Ruthie Gilmore, David Pellow, Donald Floyd, Geoff Mann, Devra Weber, Richard White, and Carl Wilmsen. I am also grateful for the professional advice and friendship of Sarah Loose, Vanessa Casanova, Jennifer Hughes, Bronwyn Leebaw, Andrew Jacobs, Catherine Allgor, David Biggs, Hong-Anh Ly, and Mary Braun. Thank you, too, to my good friends and colleagues from both inside and outside academia, who are too many to mention by name! They have provided moral support through countless emails, phone calls, and meals.

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Pineros
The Pacific Northwest. In the national imaginary, this lush corner of the country conjures such iconic images of the natural world as towering firs, verdant rainforests, surging salmon, and spotted owls. The social actors who populate this imaginary are also linked to the natural realm, bearing testimony to their seeming inseparability. The logger is among the most prominent of these actors, with looming statues of Paul Bunyan still found in rural mill towns in Washington, Oregon, and northern California (see Figure 1.1). The independent spirit of the Western logger was perhaps best captured in Ken Kesey’s popular epic, *Sometimes a Great Notion*, which became both a national bestseller and an Academy Award-nominated film. The novel and film chronicle the story of the stubborn Stampers, a family of generational loggers in the Pacific Northwest who draw the ire of townspeople because they are anti-union and refuse to co-operate in a local strike. Folk songs such as those by Robert E. Swanson further exemplify America’s romantic vision of the “lumberjack”:

There’s a life that is close unto nature,  
where the soul is happy and free,  
And you live by the brawn of your muscle –  
ah, there is the life to suit me –  
This job in a shipyard is lousy –  
a paradise fit for a tramp.  
So to Hell with a life in the city;  
I’m off – to a logging camp!

Not all depictions of the logger’s life, however, have been so heady. Scholars in particular have focused on the more sobering social aspects of timber extraction. In his account of a rural logging community in
Coos Bay, Oregon, historian William Robbins reveals that loggers are often at the mercy of distant capital markets and left with little in exchange for their labour and regional resources. Studies that focus on the economic displacement of timber workers in the western United States – due to technological improvements, mill closures, and the industry’s relocation to the southern United States in the late 1970s – touch...
upon loggers’ attachment to place and their reluctance to leave small towns in search of jobs elsewhere. These narratives vividly illustrate that poverty, alcoholism, and domestic abuse are all-too-common realities for many unemployed timber workers.4

The other renowned figure dominating our understanding of forests in the Pacific Northwest is that of the ardent environmentalist. High-profile activists like Julia Butterfly Hill, who lived for two years in a California redwood she named Luna, thrust local resistance to logging into the national and international limelight and became the subject of numerous pop-cultural references, ranging from an episode of The Simpsons to lyrics by the Red Hot Chili Peppers and Neil Young. Environmentalists have also been key players in forest politics through their effective use of litigation. Lawsuits spearheaded by activists over Forest Service violations of the Endangered Species Act and the National Forest Management Act famously led Judge William Dwyer to halt logging on spotted owl habitat in the Pacific Northwest. In 1994, President Bill Clinton implemented the Northwest Forest Plan, which reduced cutting on federal lands by 90 percent and fundamentally changed the region’s political economy and management of national forests for decades to come. Despite their prevalence, however, popular images of loggers and environmentalists do not fully reflect the social reality of contemporary forest work (see Figures 1.2 and 1.3).

In the shadowy realms of the forest today, one will rarely find the white logger or the environmental activist. Rather, one may run into the likes of Juan Cabrera, an undocumented immigrant from Zacatecas, Mexico, who crossed the border at sixteen and has been tree planting on federal lands ever since.5 One may chance upon Pedro Zamora Gómez, who was struck by an errant tree limb while thinning overgrown stands of fir, suffered a debilitating back injury, and was left to cope without health care. One may meet Santos Portillo, who started out planting saplings on rugged Forest Service terrain, later received his papeles (legal papers) through the 1986 amnesty, and is now a successful labour contractor running reforestation and fire crews of his own. Why are such stories of immigrant labour absent from mainstream conceptions of forest actors? Paul Bunyan and Julia Butterfly Hill belong in the woods; why is it that non-white immigrants are seen as an anomaly, a temporary blip on the forest management radar?

For well over a decade, Latino immigrants have constituted the majority of forest workers on both private and federal lands in the United States. Also known as pineros, they perform manually intensive activities such as piling and thinning brush, fuels reduction, pest control, and
reforestation, implementing many of the forest management techniques that produce “healthy forests.” Immigrants from Mexico (both Latinos and Mixtec/indigenous groups), Central America, and parts of Southeast Asia also find work on public lands collecting *salal* (wild floral greens) and harvesting wild mushrooms. These immigrants face unsafe working conditions and have little recourse in the face of labour violations and workplace exploitation. In the Rogue Valley of southern Oregon, which in many ways typifies the dramatic changes underway in forest work, the steady Latinization of the forest workforce has been underway since 1985. The 1980s witnessed a sharp rise in the entry of Mexican immigrants into tree planting, especially on federal lands. By the early 1990s, Latinization had spread to the ranks of forest labour contractors. Latino immigrants and their families are also fundamentally changing the broader demographics of rural residential communities in southern Oregon and in the Pacific Northwest in general.
Still, the processes by which Latinos have come to dominate large portions of forest work remain unrecognized in debates over community forestry and forest management. Emerging in the early 1990s, the community forestry movement in the western United States was perceived by many as a potential solution to gridlock among environmentalists, industry players, and federal officials over the management of national forests. The movement comprised various efforts by rural communities to gain control over the management of federal lands for both environmental and economic gains. Much of the community forestry scholarship in the United States examines collaborations, born out of environmental crisis or conflict, between community partners and the US Forest Service. These various collaborations have been hailed for bringing disparate groups in rural communities together to discuss resource management issues, build community capacity, and provide opportunities for members to work as forest stewards. Scholars have also portrayed such efforts as a foil to the top-down, technocratic approach of resource management developed in the Progressive Era of scientific forestry, and they celebrate...
collaboration in terms of its potential for reviving democracy and civic/folk science.¹⁰

The primary stakeholders in resource management collaborations have been local representatives of timber companies, environmental activists, displaced loggers, and government agency officials. Given the presence of such diverse interest groups, the assumption is that everyone has a seat at the table. These “community-based” collaborations, however, exclude numerous individuals, including people who may not necessarily be full-time workers, local residents, or even citizens. The case of pineros raises the question of what it means to be a meaningful stakeholder when one’s claims to basic rights such as pay for work, health care, and access to employment are compromised by immigration status. While decisions on how to manage forests affect all people who depend on natural resource-related work for their livelihood, involvement or participation in community forestry collaborations is not necessarily premised on one’s labour. Many resource management collaborations do not acknowledge the plight of immigrant forest workers, let alone address their concerns. Thus, terminology like “stakeholders” and “participation” sometimes rings hollow. Stakeholders are not simply different groups with distinct perspectives who all have an equal voice at the table. Often, recognized stakeholders are groups and organizations who have access to resources and established relationships with decision makers. There are radical power imbalances in US society, which are also reflected in community forestry arenas. There are “people at stake” and there are “stakeholders” – the two are not always commensurable.

The scholarly privileging of white loggers, logging company officials, environmental activists, and federal land management agencies reinforces the elision of immigrants from forest management. Prominent books such as Anatomy of a Conflict, Deadfall, Community and the Northwest Logger, and Hard Times in Paradise represent white male US citizens as the typical face of forestry in the Pacific Northwest.¹¹ Similarly, federal policies – such as President Clinton’s Northwest Forest Plan and President G.W. Bush’s Healthy Forests Restoration Act – have been silent on the issue of forest labour. Together, these oversights constitute a series of omissions about how and by whom federal lands are managed.

Representations of white loggers and environmentalists as the only agents in the realm of forests are deeply problematic. Yet the racialization of forests and other “natural” landscapes as primarily “white spaces” is not new. The omission of people of colour from such arenas extends back to beliefs about the manifest destiny of white pioneers, embodied in Frederick Jackson Turner’s 1893 frontier thesis and in the forceful
removal of Native peoples from their territories in order to create untouched wilderness for the enjoyment of white tourists. Turner argued that the “frontier” – as the border shaped by the constant move westward and the “meeting point between savagery and civilization” – was the crucible in which Americans and Americanism were forged. Characteristics of the quintessential American, “that coarseness and strength combined with acuteness and acquisitiveness; that practical inventive turn of mind, quick to find expedients; that masterful grasp of material things ... that restless, nervous energy; that dominant individualism,” were all attributed to the influence of the frontier. With white males depicted as the only relevant actors on Turner’s frontier, the agency of other groups was written out. Such a racist, sexist, and imperialist portrayal of free and western lands ignored the presence of Native Americans and their eventual and bloody subjugation, as well as already settled Hispanic lands. Democracy and freedom, as Turner asserts, were not simply intrinsic to the frontier but were premised on the active oppression of other groups.

The notion of forests as “white spaces” may thus be understood as a historical product of racialized violence and white supremacy in the American West. In the nineteenth century, for example, the “racial line was drawn along European and non-European lines,” and non-white groups (Native Americans, Mexicans, Blacks, Chinese, and Japanese) were ordered both in relation to one another and, inferiorly, in relation to whites. Prominent legislation that institutionalized white supremacy and gave white male citizens privileged access to land include the Chinese Exclusion Act (1889), the Alien Land Act (1913), and the Johnson-Reed Act to exclude Japanese labourers (1924). Today, the consequences of such historic exclusion are partially seen in the lack of minorities using forests for recreation and their limited representation within federal agencies such as the US National Park Service and the US Forest Service. Scholar Jeff Romm argues that the whiteness of forest spaces may be understood as a product of simultaneous processes of social and resource restraints. Romm compares historic developments in the American South and American West. Freed slaves had to buy their own land after the Civil War and Reconstruction, while whites were encouraged to move out West and were given free land to homestead. The immobilization of the black South is thus inextricably linked to the opening of a white West. Romm also extends the analysis of social and resource restraints to the creation of national forest reserves during the Progressive Era. The development of national forests increased the value of land outside reserves. As more people became concentrated
on that land, wages in these areas decreased. Prior to the creation of forest reserves, the public domain was disposed of, or given away in the case of the Homestead Act of 1862, to those who “improved” land through clearing it for settlement. Racial segregation, moreover, ensured that ownership of remaining private lands went to whites.

The western United States was partly formed through a system of race and resource-based reserves that maintained an exclusive order of white governance whereby people who lived in and depended on the forests, if they were not white, were overlooked by forest policies altogether. Over the course of the nineteenth century, Native Americans were driven off their homelands and fenced into reserves. Race-based immigration policies were used to secure pools of unprotected, low-wage immigrant labour for local farms and fisheries. Later, New Deal protections did not extend to agricultural workers. World War II initiatives like the Bracero Program institutionalized non-white farm labour and created a de facto system of social and spatial restraints through which people were confined to particular (often agricultural) places.17

Of course, one can justifiably argue that federal agencies such as the National Park Service, Forest Service, and Bureau of Land Management were never established to intentionally exclude people of colour. Moreover, the language of federal forest policies is race-neutral and addresses neither white nor non-white workers explicitly. The assertion of forests as white spaces is thus not to suggest that the federal government sought outright to exclude minorities from these lands. Federal policies, however, were implicitly racialized, given historic, political, and economic power dynamics (who wielded power, and with what priorities), and have contributed to institutionalized racism in both forest work and recreation today.18

Besides scholarship on forestry, pineros are invisible in research on immigrant settlement and labour incorporation. A number of studies have already shown that immigrants, especially from Mexico, are now settling outside traditional destinations such as California, Texas, and Arizona. A variety of factors have contributed to this shift, including anti-immigrant policies in border states and increases in labour competition among low-wage workers.19 Since the 1990s, Mexican immigration has shifted towards new states, and there are now significant Latino settlements in the southern United States, the Midwest, and parts of the Pacific Northwest.20 Still, research on immigrant labour remains predominantly focused on national trends and on socio-economic outcomes in urban areas.21 When scholars do pay attention to immigrant labour in rural areas, the focus is primarily on farm workers, not forest workers.
More recently, immigrant forest workers have started to receive some attention from scholars and journalists. In November 2005, the Sacramento Bee documented the plight of pineros across the United States in an award-winning investigative series that eventually led to congressional hearings on guest workers on federal lands.\(^22\) Ironically, these hearings did little to address the labour abuses faced by pineros in the Pacific Northwest, most of whom are not guest workers or otherwise documented.\(^23\) Immigrant forest workers have also received periodic attention in state and national newspapers, with feature stories on fire fighters and floral-greens harvesters.\(^24\) These articles raise troubling questions about the management of public lands by a vulnerable workforce of low-wage immigrants.

While important, most of the extant scholarship on Latino forest workers has focused on plantation forestry in the US South\(^25\) or on non-timber forest product harvesters in the Pacific West.\(^26\) Industrial forestry on private lands in the South is often subsidized by state incentives to pulp-and-paper corporations and is a for-profit operation. It differs starkly from the ecosystem management work on federal lands in the West, which is funded primarily through congressional appropriations to the Forest Service budget. In Alabama, Anglo labour contractors recruit workers from Mexico and Latin America through kinship networks and via a system of H-2B guest worker visas.\(^27\) Similar patterns of worker recruitment, through H-2A visas, are found for Christmas tree producers in North Carolina.\(^28\)

Taken together, these cases do not address the extensive use of migrant workers on public lands. In contrast to private plantation forestry in the South, which depends primarily on labour recruitment through a system of guest worker visas, or tree planting in Canada, which relies mostly on native-born college students,\(^29\) undocumented immigrants constitute the majority of reforestation workers on federal lands in the western United States.\(^30\) Whereas environmental activism on public lands has centred on logging, fire, and forest health, the issue of immigrant labour exploitation continues to be overlooked. This is particularly interesting because it points to a phenomenon whereby the labour force on private lands is actually more regulated (at least in the Southeast) – through a system of H-2B and H-2A guest worker visas – than the workforce on federal lands in the West, which remains largely unregulated and undocumented. While a significant number of workers on private lands are also undocumented, a predominant and sustained focus of immigration policies in only the private sector helps perpetuate ignorance about immigrants working in the public realm.
Overall, then, current scholarship has yet to systematically address deeper questions regarding the arrival, settlement, and continued exploitation of immigrant forest workers: How, in fact, did Latino immigrants come to manage national forests? How do federal agencies perpetuate systems of labour exploitation? What are the working conditions of pineros today? Are the concerns and perspectives of immigrant workers represented in debates and policy considerations about forest management? These are some of the central questions guiding the analyses in this book.

What follows is a social history of Latino immigrants managing forests on federal lands. The area of a forest that grows in the shade of the canopy layer is called the “understory.” Most manually intensive forest work takes place in this shadowy realm. Latino immigrants are thus both figuratively and literally hidden in the understory. This book not only widens the scope of environmental history in Oregon; it also sheds light on the broader dynamics of immigrant settlement and incorporation in parts of the rural West. I address four important sets of questions:

1. How has the forest workforce changed on federal lands in the western United States? What work is done in the forest and by what groups of workers?
2. What factors have accounted for the rapid Latinization of the forestry workforce in southern Oregon? What accounts for the exploitation of thousands of undocumented immigrants on federal lands?
3. How does the restructuring of work on federal lands contribute to rural Latino immigration in the Pacific Northwest?
4. What are the normative, political, and policy implications of using a highly marginalized workforce to implement forest management policies?

The Rogue Valley is a key site for studying the Latinization of forest labour for several reasons. In recent years, more procurement dollars have been spent on forest management work in southern Oregon than in other parts of the state, and contractors from this region have won a greater share of federal contracts in forestry. This area has seen a rapid rise in the number of settled Latino contractors and forest workers since the early 1990s. These contractors and their crews work on federal lands throughout southern Oregon and northern California, including the Umpqua National Forest, the Rogue River-Siskiyou National Forest, and various Bureau of Land Management lands. Finally, 53 percent of the
land in the Rogue Valley is federally owned, a proportion that is similar to the rest of Oregon. This high ratio makes federal lands the largest sites of labour exploitation, and the federal government among the largest employers (albeit indirectly), of undocumented workers in the United States.

**Analytic Frames**
The changing face of forestry in the Pacific Northwest can be viewed through at least three different theoretical lenses. First and foremost, this is a story about the changing racial composition of manual work in the woods, from a predominantly native-born and white labour force to a largely undocumented Latino population. Second, it is about differential power dynamics within ethnic groups and the ways in which kinship ties affect contractor-employee relations in the growing arena of contingent labour. Finally, one can understand the shifting demographics of, and related consequences for, distinct groups of forest workers as a product of the overlooked intersections between immigration, land management, and labour policies.

Geoff Mann’s scholarship helps theorize the racialization of pineros in the Pacific Northwest. Mann examines the rhetorical use of the term “wage slaves,” which is employed by both white workers and Latino forest workers in the Northwest. Historically, the “wage slavery” metaphor was used primarily to protest the conditions faced by white workers in the West, who felt economically threatened by immigrant labour. Mann argues, however, that today, Latino immigrants use this metaphor to highlight their own exploitation and to demand equal status with white workers. Whites, on the other hand, use “wage slavery” to refer to the poor treatment of immigrant workers and also to the unfair low-wage bidding system for Forest Service contracts. In effect, the substandard wages given to immigrants are perceived as eroding the position of white workers. White workers thus articulate a class-specific form of anti-immigrant sentiment in seeing the interests of “all workers” – read as white – with a legitimate claim to employment in the sector as damaged by undocumented Latino labour (“illegal aliens”). Moreover, this leads to all Latino workers being perceived as undocumented.

Mann’s distinction between white and Latino workers is ultimately complicated by the presence of contractors who are also primarily Latino. Thus, while a representation of Latinos as a homogeneous and “subjugated” racial category in relation to whites has some truth, it does not fully address the issue of varied power dynamics and intra-racial
exploitation among Latinos. As this study will highlight, immigrant networks and family ties often exacerbate the labour subjugation and wage slavery of undocumented relatives by Latino contractors and foremen. In effect, it is not clear whether Latinos actually compete with whites for the same kind of work. The question of wage slavery may not necessarily pertain to an Anglo-Latino labour relationship, but, rather, to dynamics of intra-ethnic labour exploitation between Latinos themselves.

This raises the question of whether social networks and kinship ties serve as positive forms of social capital. Put another way, are networks of friends and family helpful to new immigrants? In their study of Cuban and Mexican immigrants in the United States, sociologists Alejandro Portes and Robert Bach claim that ethnic enclaves provide spaces in which immigrants can move up the social ladder, despite discrimination from outside society. Immigrants benefit by getting jobs through friends and relatives, have the opportunity to learn the ropes, and progress in terms of social mobility. However, others have rightly argued that ethnic enclaves, and particularly relations of social obligation, are not necessarily beneficial to all immigrants. Enclaves may favour immigrant entrepreneurs but not necessarily low-wage immigrant workers. Scholar Cecilia Menjívar illustrates that social networks cannot always be taken as positives. Rather, the nature of government policies towards immigrants, the local political-economic context for new arrivals, and the presence of organizations serving immigrants all influence the ways in which networks may either hinder or help immigrants in new areas.

Additionally, most scholars have examined the marginalization of immigrant workers using a dichotomous, primary/secondary approach to labour markets. Differences between a primary labour market, with secure, high-paying jobs, and a secondary labour market of low-wage and less secure jobs are used to explain the less-than-desirable occupational position of non-white immigrants. While differentiating between labour markets is helpful, such dichotomization can overlook the politics and policies creating such markets in the first place. To this end, Brendan Sweeney emphasizes economic, political, and sociocultural factors shaping labour market segmentation in Ontario’s tree-planting industry. He convincingly shows that a host of causes, including government policies, changes to the forest products industry, and cultural stigma associated with reforestation, all contributed to the marginalization of tree planters in Canada.

I employ a similar causal analysis to understand the marginal position of pineros. While Latino forest workers are certainly relegated to the
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confines of a secondary labour market, their marginality has been shaped by multiple factors including changes to federal land management and immigration policies, and new labour opportunities available to native-born whites. I thus use the concept of a “segmented labour force” (versus a “segmented labour market”) to refer to internal segmentation within the forest management industry, and specifically the distinctions in legal status between documented Latino contractors and undocumented workers. As I will show, not all Latinos in forestry are equally marginalized.

Overview of Chapters

Chapter 2 delves into the recent history of reforestation efforts on public lands in Oregon. I highlight reforestation’s intimate connection with large-scale logging operations and how both processes constitute activities, whether destructive or restorative, in which people strive to utilize and manage natural landscapes and resources. I then document the presence of a diverse reforestation workforce in Oregon that emerged in the 1970s, including numerous contractor-run crews and hippie-based co-operatives. I examine the experiences of these different groups and also focus on the more general competition between tree-planting co-operatives and contractors. This chapter closes with the argument that the decline of reforestation co-operatives that began in the 1980s was largely tied to changes in labour law (which made co-operatives unable to compete with contractors) and workers’ pursuit of employment opportunities in other sectors. As a result, reforestation work became available to larger numbers of immigrant workers in the late 1970s and early 1980s.

In Chapter 3, I present a comprehensive analysis of the Latinization of forest work in the Rogue Valley. Here, I rely on oral histories and archival material to construct a narrative of Latinos’ involvement in forest work and immigrants’ broader experiences of settling in the area during the early 1980s. The chapter explores group experiences of isolation and racism, as well as the phenomenon of Latinization, which I detail in three parts. First, I look at the movement of immigrant workers “from the pears to the pines” and, correspondingly, “from the field to the forest.” I then document the transition of many Latinos from forest workers to forest labour contractors in the late 1980s and early 1990s. Finally, I explore the broader Latinization of the settled population of the Rogue Valley and show that immigrants are significantly changing the demographic composition of the region.

In Chapter 4, I analyze the varying labour marginality of Anglo loggers, tree planters, and pineros. I focus on aspects of workers’ economic
and social marginality and examine their labour conditions, coverage by the media, and political visibility. Working conditions include safety on the job, wages, access to benefits, protection from labour violations, and the structure of labour arrangements. I also examine media coverage of forest workers in national and local newspapers, and identify policies and organizations that benefit or represent the concerns of particular groups of forest workers. Ultimately, this chapter highlights the idea that pineros are the most marginal of the three groups of forest workers and that vulnerable legal status and limited English proficiency contribute to their disadvantaged positions.

Chapter 5 moves beyond the labour marginality of pineros to explore how immigrants organize to confront their exclusion and exploitation. Although pineros’ lack of legal status and limited English proficiency may hinder their ability to mobilize, groups elsewhere have been able to overcome similar barriers. I thus begin by examining the role of advocacy organizations such as the United Farm Workers in California and the Willamette Valley Immigration Project in Oregon during the early 1970s. I compare the organizing success of these groups with their less activist counterparts in the Rogue Valley and find that the era in which organizations emerged matters. Both the United Farm Workers and the Willamette Valley Immigration Project (which later became Pineros y Campesinos Unidos del Noroeste, Oregon’s only farm worker union) were founded, and successfully mobilized immigrant workers, prior to the 1980s. By contrast, the organizations that serve immigrants in the Rogue Valley, which have been far less radical overall, were all established after 1985. This pattern suggests that there were windows of opportunity prior to the 1980s that made organizing among immigrant farm and forest workers in California and Oregon more likely and more successful than in the years that followed.

In Chapter 6, I conclude the book with a discussion of the ethical and policy implications of having a large number of marginal immigrants managing federal lands. I also suggest ways to improve the working conditions of pineros and increase their involvement in debates over resource management, labour standards, and immigration policy. Finally, I call for a re-envisioning of the history of forest work such that the social realities of Oregon’s understory may be more accurately represented.