

7-29-2020

Some "Taco Literacy" Thoughts about Milwaukee

Claire Edwards
University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee

Follow this and additional works at: <https://dc.uwm.edu/writingmke>

Recommended Citation

Edwards, Claire, "Some "Taco Literacy" Thoughts about Milwaukee" (2020). *Writing & Rhetoric MKE*. 38.
<https://dc.uwm.edu/writingmke/38>

This Blog Post is brought to you for free and open access by UWM Digital Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Writing & Rhetoric MKE by an authorized administrator of UWM Digital Commons. For more information, please contact scholarlycommunicationteam-group@uwm.edu.

Some “Taco Literacy” Thoughts about Milwaukee

7/29/2020

By Claire Edwards

Gustavo Arellano describes [Steven Alvarez’s “taco literacy”](#) as an “examin[ation of] Latino immigrant communities through the seemingly simple acts of eating and talking about Mexican food.” Alvarez started this project of sorts while working in [Kentucky](#) and continues it now in New York, showcasing the variety and expansiveness of Latinx and Latinx-inspired cuisine in two very different parts of the country.

Having been born and raised in Southern California, the Midwest initially struck me as largely void of Mexican food options. But, I quickly learned that that was just ignorance on my part, an ignorance that I was relieved of the first time I ate at [Conejito’s Place](#) in Walker’s Point and had the best chicken mole of my life. As noted on their website, Conejito’s was opened in 1972 by Jose “Conejito” Garza and has been in operation ever since.

So, indeed, I first came to my limited understanding of Milwaukee’s Latinx community through food, a positioning that Alvarez seems to advocate. Conejito’s Place is located at 539 W Virginia St, placing it in the southside neighborhood of Walker’s Point which Visit Milwaukee describes as an “industrial area [that] is now a cultural and foodie hotspot.” Walker’s Point has an interesting Latinx history as Mexicans immigrated to the area in the early 1900s, many working at the Pfister & Vogel tannery. One notable example is Federico Herrera who moved to Walker’s Point in 1927 and was a part of establishing the city’s first Spanish-language newspapers.

Today, Walker’s Point is home to a high percentage of Hispanic individuals and families, though demographics on the exact percentage are inconsistent. Unfortunately, Walker’s Point is currently experiencing what many affordable, diverse, and previously industry-oriented urban neighborhoods have experienced over the last several years. With businesses like Colectivo Coffee and microbreweries opening in the neighborhood due to profits and affordability, the focus on Walker’s Point cultural history can be easily missed.

Milwaukee’s Latinx history and presence is also easily overlooked due to its absence from much of the popular conception of the city as a French and German American city. Not to mention the harmful ways that this European discovery story marginalizes American Indians, it also neglects to adequately focus on the current – and long-standing – diversity of the city. This skewed perception is due in large part to the primacy of the written record in historical accounts of the city’s origins. As for why these accounts often fail to emphasize significant immigrations in the 20th century, particularly those from Spanish-language countries, the answer to that is less clear.

To learn more about Milwaukee’s Hispanic-focused, -supported, and -hosted events, check out the following resource compiled by Visit Milwaukee: <https://www.visitmilwaukee.org/about->

[mke/diversity-and-inclusion/hispanic/](#)

Other resources & consulted works:

- <http://conejitos-place.com/>
- <http://www.neighborhoodsinmilwaukee.org/Walker's%20Point.pdf>
- <https://www.southernfoodways.org/are-you-taco-literate/>
- <https://www.latinoartsinc.org/>
- <https://www.uc.edu/content/dam/uc/journals/composition-studies/docs/backissues/45-2/45.2%20Alvarez%20CD.pdf>
- <https://statisticalatlas.com/neighborhood/Wisconsin/Milwaukee/Walkers-Point/Race-and-Ethnicity>

Claire Edwards is a third-year PhD student in Public Rhetorics and Community Engagement at UWM. She spent several years in teaching, tutoring, and administrative positions at community colleges and online universities in Southern California before moving to Milwaukee to pursue her doctorate. She spends her free time watching movies with her husband and cat.