



New Destination Dreaming: Immigration, Race, and Legal Status in the Rural American South

Helen Marrow

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New York, Chicago, and Los Angeles have long been shaped by immigration. These gateway cities have traditionally been assumed to be the major flashpoints in American debates over immigration policy—but the reality on the ground is proving different. Since the 1980s, new immigrants have increasingly settled in rural and suburban areas, particularly within the South. Couple this demographic change with an increase in unauthorized immigrants, and the rural South, once perhaps the most culturally and racially "settled" part of the country, now offers a window into the changing dynamics of immigration and, more generally, the changing face of America.

New Destination Dreaming explores how the rural context impacts the immigrant experience, how rapid Hispanic immigration influences southern race relations, and how institutions like schools and law enforcement agencies deal with unauthorized residents. Though the South is assumed to be an economically depressed region, low-wage food processing jobs are offering Hispanic newcomers the opportunity to carve out a living and join the rural working class, though this is not without its problems. Inattention from politicians to this growing population and rising black-brown tensions are both factors in contemporary rural southern life.

Ultimately, Marrow presents a cautiously optimistic view of Hispanic newcomers' opportunities for upward mobility in the rural South, while underscoring the threat of anti-immigrant sentiment and restrictive policymaking that has gripped the region in recent years. Lack of citizenship and legal status still threatens many Hispanic newcomers' opportunities. This book uncovers what more we can do to ensure that America's newest residents become productive and integrated members of rural southern society rather than a newly excluded underclass.

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