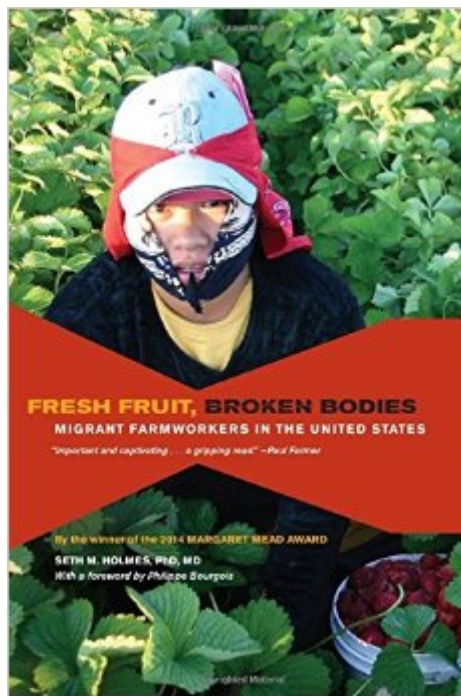


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Fresh Fruit, Broken Bodies: Migrant Farmworkers In The United States (California Series In Public Anthropology)



Synopsis

Fresh Fruit, Broken Bodies provides an intimate examination of the everyday lives and suffering of Mexican migrants in our contemporary food system. An anthropologist and MD in the mold of Paul Farmer and Didier Fassin, Holmes shows how market forces, anti-immigrant sentiment, and racism undermine health and health care. Holmes's material is visceral and powerful. He trekked with his companions illegally through the desert into Arizona and was jailed with them before they were deported. He lived with indigenous families in the mountains of Oaxaca and in farm labor camps in the U.S., planted and harvested corn, picked strawberries, and accompanied sick workers to clinics and hospitals. This embodied anthropology deepens our theoretical understanding of the ways in which social inequalities and suffering come to be perceived as normal and natural in society and in health care. All of the book award money and royalties from the sales of this book have been donated to farm worker unions, farm worker organizations and farm worker projects in consultation with farm workers who appear in the book.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

I've not even finished reading this book yet, and I've already decided that this is one of the most important ethnographies ever written. It is theoretically rich, yet written in a way that is accessible to a broad audience. This ethnography has the potential to transform the way people think about immigration, forcing them to examine the global system that allows undocumented workers to be

treated as subhuman.

This book was a requirement of my Anthropology class. Prior to reading, I had a built in opinion on immigration in the United States. These ideas were influenced by my family members who have standard republican views on the matter. I always looked at Mexican immigrants as how they are stereotyped in our society and never considered looking into their motives for coming into our country. While reading this book, I was shocked by how much discrimination and dehumanization the immigrants face coming into our country. This book shifted my views on immigration and has allowed me to become more open minded about the situation. *Fresh Fruit, Broken Bodies* mainly discusses the mistreatment that the indigenous Mexican group known as the Triquis face. Throughout Seth's experience, we see why the Triquis migrate to America (what the process consists of, dangers faced when doing so, how hard it is to actually make it to America, etc.), how they are treated in America, their living conditions, and what their work consists of. Seth's role of interpretive labor truly allows us to see inside their lives and witness the dehumanization that they deal with on a regular basis. In chapter one, we learn about Seth's first attempt of migrating with a Triqui group into the United States. We get the gist of the whole process, learn what a coyote is, the risks they are facing, etc. When they are captured by the Border Patrol, we are introduced to the first form of mistreatment the migrants face. Seth is held in a separate jail cell with separate charges, and from how he is treated, I can't even imagine how much worse it was for the Triqui's. Chapter two discusses what Seth does after the previous incident. We are introduced to the first form of things such as habitus, hegemony, and discrimination that takes place in our country. We also start learn about importance of Mexican immigrants and the ethnography's subjects. The third chapter begins to get into the typical work that the indigenous Mexicans perform. We learn about every position on the Tanaka farm, and are introduced to important workers amongst the farm. The hierarchy of the farm is established. We see how the work is broken down, who is qualified to perform certain jobs, etc. This shows us the true inequalities that are established at this farm and how the Mexican migrants are inferior to everyone else. Living conditions of the migrants are described as well. We also see how the stereotypes that these people get play in and where they stem from. We learn what the true reasons for these stereotypes are. Chapters four and five get into the structural and symbolic violence faced by the migrants, as well as the physical pain they suffer from grueling labor. We learn how they are mistreated when getting help for their health issues and how they are unsuccessful at getting substantial compensation for these injuries. This chapter is very shocking from the injuries they are subjected to, to the unprofessional attitudes the doctors

have toward them. Chapter six goes into more depth about the symbolic violence the hierarchies described throughout the book commit. Chapter seven then provides a conclusion of Seth's fieldwork and wraps everything together. Although this book was excellently put together and kept me interested in reading, there were some points that I did not like so much. I felt that a lot of aspects were repetitive throughout the book, where they could have been left to a specific chapter. The order in which Seth explains his events also jumped around a bit throughout the book, which for me was kind of hard to keep up with. Overall, I would say this book is very worth reading. It helped me become more open minded with the Mexican immigration issue in our country. Although I still have some disagreements with Seth Holmes' views on the matter, I know where he is coming from and I am able to put myself in his position. I would recommend this book for any anthropology student who is looking for real life examples when it comes to hegemony, biopower, structural/symbolic violence, and habitus.

Holmes' moving work reveals the "bad faith" American consumerism that criminalizes migrant laborers even as it depends on them for access to the dinner table. While his theoretical framework is at times awkward, his analysis of the social plight of his Triqui companions more than compensates for this deficiency. The larger issues of neoliberal market inequalities may at times seem a little daunting for non-academic readers, but Holmes' narrative consistently demonstrates that our demand for cheap products has devastating global consequences. Definitely worth a close read.

This book blew my mind. My background is in the hard sciences, and so I was initially not familiar with this style of ethnography/immersion study in which a person lives and participates with migrant laborers for months in order to get a sense for the human dynamics at play in the current Mexico-to-US border crosser/ farm laborer situation. The author is humble and rigorous in his analysis of the information he gleaned from his ethnography, which I found really rewarding to read. One of my favorite parts of the book was the analysis of what many doctors choose to "see" and "not see" regarding their migrant patients; things that may be very important to the patient or very pertinent to their injury/ailment. A very readable book considering it is an academic book rather than journalism.

I finished this book last week and I still don't know what to do with it. The perspective was important and the information has left me with a need to make some changes, but I am not sure what those

changes are. I will first admit that this is a biased review. I am a great admirer of Seth and I was pretty sure that I was going to like the book before I read it, and it truly did not disappoint. The story of crossing the border and living for these seasons with these voiceless people is a dramatic story that needs to be heard across this country. There is a lot more to the fruit that we buy at the store than meets the eye. Seth has given us a part of that story. There are times when the book began to feel more like a PhD thesis than a book, and places where my lack of anthropological framework were obvious. As well the book raises a lot more questions than it answers, which is my bar for an important book. My book group appreciated the book. Even though many of them were physicians they were able to listen to the careful critiques of our system without defensiveness. Yet once again, none of us felt like we had any answers to the challenges of the book. This book tells a story that no one is telling about a population that is largely invisible and silent in our culture. It needs to be told and retold again and again that we might hear it clearly. If you are willing to sit with challenging issues, than this book will be a good and meaty read for you. If you are uncomfortable being challenged about the injustice in our nation, click off the page and don't go anywhere near this book. Now what to do with the information I now have?

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