



## Consuming Mexican Labor: From the Bracero Program to NAFTA

By Ronald Mize, Alicia Swords

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Mexican migration to the United States and Canada is a highly contentious issue in the eyes of many North Americans, and every generation seems to construct the northward flow of labor as a brand new social problem. The history of Mexican labor migration to the United States, from the Bracero Program (1942-1964) to the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), suggests that Mexicans have been actively encouraged to migrate northward when labor markets are in short supply, only to be turned back during economic downturns. In this timely book, Mize and Swords dissect the social relations that define how corporations, consumers, and states involve Mexican immigrant laborers in the politics of production and consumption. The result is a comprehensive and contemporary look at the increasingly important role that Mexican immigrants play in the North American economy.

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### Editorial Review

#### Review

Ronald Mize and Alicia Swords have penned a tour de force of Mexican labour, capitalism and consumers, marshalling an impressive array of evidence drawn from a variety of bibliographic and archival resources and spiced with data from interviews and personal experiences. [...] This is a wonderful contribution to the literature, an excellent combination of historical and sociological analysis that includes a perceptive and challenging political assessment of immigrant exploitation, struggles and resistances, and how and why Mexican immigrants can play key roles in bringing about more just societies in North America. I recommend it highly. (Leigh Binford, *Journal of Latin American Studies*)

The real strength of this work, constituting over half of the book, is the attention given to the growing dispersal of Mexican laborers in the last few decades from the American West to the Midwest "heartland" (Iowa, Nebraska, Illinois, Kansas, and so on), the hinterlands of the Northeast (especially non-metropolitan New York), the Northwest, and, most importantly, the South, where the greatest demographic changes have taken place. (*Pacific Historical Review*)

*Consuming Mexican Labor* is a well-researched, clearly written, insightful analysis of the relations between labour migration from Mexico and mass consumption in the US and, to a lesser extent, Canada. (*Canadian Journal of Latin American & Caribbean Studies*)

Mize and Swords survey the range of solutions that academic experts and social activists have proposed over the decades, and use this historical framework to present their explanation of contemporary problems. The authors structure their book to give a thoughtful presentation for scholars and other specialists and also for readers who are seeking an introductory text. (John A. Britton, *The History Teacher*)

*Consuming Mexican Labor* is a vigorous and refreshing attempt to bring labor migration back in to the study of contemporary social change. (*Contemporary Sociology*)

#### Review

In the dismal shadow of Arizona and idiot nativism, this wonderful book reminds us of who turns the wheels of the North American economy and how their empowerment might save us all. (Mike Davis, author of *No One Is Illegal* and *In Praise of Barbarians*)

In this stunning, authoritatively researched book, Mize and Swords move beyond the typical binaries and inspire readers' heads and hearts with a persuasive vision of transformational politics that empowers people. Reaching deep into the history of how we got into such perilous trouble and going far beyond throwing more money at the border, temporary worker programs, and increased criminalization strategies, Mize and Swords offer a brilliant, practical, and wholly attainable way forward. This book is a must-read for anyone serious about fixing the immigration crisis. (Ashley Judd, actor, advocate, Harvard MPA, '10)

*Consuming Mexican Labor* ranges across regions and decades to reveal patterns that do not emerge from more narrow temporal and spatial approaches. By exposing the previously occluded connection between increasing consumer demand for goods and services and the exploitation of immigrant labor, Mize and Swords help us see how racist beliefs and actions concern interests, attitudes, and property as well as pigment, power, and prejudice. (George Lipsitz, University of California, Santa Barbara, author of *The*

## *Possessive Investment in Whiteness*)

From the Back Cover

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-- Mike Davis, University of California, Riverside, and author of *No One is Illegal* and *In Praise of Barbarians*

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--Ashley Judd, Actress, Advocate, Harvard Kennedy School MPA '10, Board of Directors, Population Services International

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