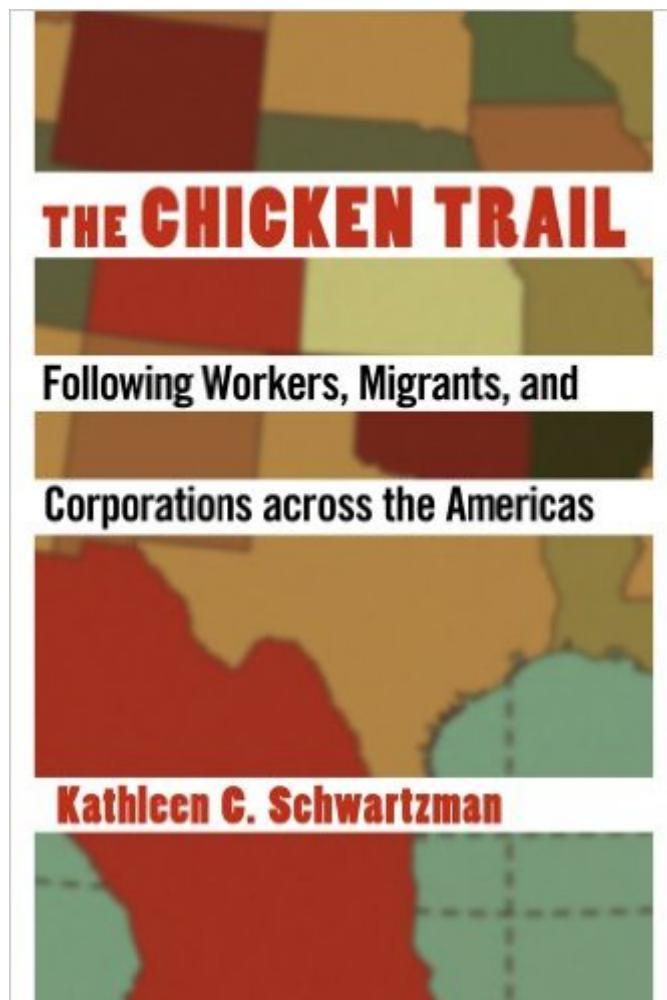


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The Chicken Trail: Following Workers, Migrants, And Corporations Across The Americas



Synopsis

In *The Chicken Trail*, Kathleen C. Schwartzman examines the impact of globalization and of NAFTA in particular on the North American poultry industry, focusing on the displacement of African American workers in the southeast United States and workers in Mexico. Schwartzman documents how the transformation of U.S. poultry production in the 1980s increased its export capacity and changed the nature and consequences of labor conflict. She documents how globalization and NAFTA in particular forced Mexico to open its commodity and capital markets, and eliminate state support of corporations and rural smallholders. As a consequence, many Mexicans were forced to abandon their no longer sustainable small farms, with some seeking work in industrialized poultry factories north of the border. By following this chicken trail, Schwartzman breaks through the deadlocked immigration debate, highlighting the broader economic and political contexts of immigration flows. The narrative that undocumented workers take jobs that Americans don't want to do is too simplistic. Schwartzman argues instead that illegal immigration is better understood as a labor story in which the hiring of undocumented workers is part of a management response to the crises of profit making and labor-management conflict. By placing the poultry industry at the center of a constellation of competing individual, corporate, and national interests and such factors as national debt, free trade, economic development, industrial restructuring, and African American unemployment, *The Chicken Trail* makes a significant contribution to our understanding of the implications of globalization for labor and how the externalities of free trade and neoliberalism become the social problems of nations and the tragedies of individuals.

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Customer Reviews

The Chicken TrailFollowing Workers, Migrants and Corporations across the AmericasBy Kathleen C. Schwartzman I offer my complements for an outstanding overview of these most complex issues. She did a great deal of research, included many sources and made personal trips to processing plants in the USA as well as Mexico. She talked with Mexican farmers, illegal immigrants and union organizers. She chose the radical changes in production of Chicken as a perfect example of the effect it had on labor in this country and loss of the family farm in Mexico which led inexorably in the increase of illegal immigrants to America. She is very careful in not wanting her book to become political. She tries to state the facts and let them speak for themselves. I, on the other hand enjoy jumping in and calling a spade a spade so I am going to write this review from what I gleaned after reading. Chicken processing advanced rapidly in the 90's impelled by innovation and technology. The largest plants are located in N.C., Alabama, Georgia, Arkansas and Mississippi. The workers were black for the most part. Chicken processing as well as manufacturing in general made great strides in the South due to the anti-union sentiment. The States were all right to work States. As the processes sped up there were increased injuries and fatigue resulting in the attempt to establish unions. The companies exhibited ingenuity in finding ways to avoid including going bankrupt and re-opening with a new name and firing all employees. The Company officers decided to replace with immigrants from Mexico and other countries. They advertised, paid bonuses, provided false papers, etc. No executive was ever found guilty of these most obvious offenses. In the meantime the black unemployment rate doubled.

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