



# **The Maya of Morganton: Work and Community in the Nuevo New South**

*Leon Fink*

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The arrival of several hundred Guatemalan-born workers in a Morganton, North Carolina, poultry plant sets the stage for this dramatic story of human struggle in an age of globalization. When laborers' concerns about safety and fairness spark a strike and, ultimately, a unionizing campaign at Case Farms, the resulting decade-long standoff pits a recalcitrant New South employer against an unlikely coalition of antagonists. Mayan refugees from war-torn Guatemala, Mexican workers, and a diverse group of local allies join forces with the Laborers union. The ensuing clash becomes a testing ground for "new labor" workplace and legal strategies. In the process, the nation's fastest-growing immigrant region encounters a new struggle for social justice.

Using scores of interviews, Leon Fink gives voice to a remarkably resilient people. He shows that, paradoxically, what sustains these global travelers are the ties of local community. Whether one is finding a job, going to church, joining a soccer team, or building a union, kin and linguistic connections to the place of one's birth prove crucial in negotiating today's global marketplace.

A story set at the intersection of globalization and community, two words not often linked, *The Maya of Morganton* addresses fundamental questions about the changing face of labor in the United States.

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