



The Mayans Among Us: Migrant Women and Meatpacking on the Great Plains

Ann L. Sittig, Martha Florinda González

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When Ann L. Sittig made a quick stop at a secondhand shop in a small meatpacking town in Nebraska, she overheard a couple speaking Spanish with the unmistakable inflection of Mayan. When she inquired further, the couple confirmed that they were Mayans from Guatemala and indicated there were lots of Mayans living in the area. Soon afterward, Sittig met Martha Florinda González, a Mayan community leader living in Nebraska, and together they began gathering the oral histories of contemporary Mayan women living in the state and working in meatpacking plants.

In *The Mayans Among Us*, Sittig and González focus on the unique experiences of the Central American indigenous immigrants who are often overlooked in media coverage of Latino and Latina migration to the Great Plains. Many of the Mayan immigrants are political refugees from repressive, war-torn countries and as such are distinct from Latin America's economic immigrants. Sittig and González initiated group dialogues with Mayan women about the psychological, sociological, and economic wounds left by war, poverty, immigration, and residence in a new country. The Mayans share their concerns and hopes as they negotiate their new home, culture, language, and life in Nebraska in order to survive and send economic support back home for their children. Longtime Nebraskans share their perspectives on the immigrants as well.

The Mayans Among Us poignantly explores how Mayan women in rural Nebraska meatpacking plants weave together their three distinct identities: Mayan, Central American, and American.

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