

Latino Immigrants
and the
Transformation of
the U.S. South

EDITED BY MARY E. ODEM
AND ELAINE LACY

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32. See George Borjas, "Immigrants, Minorities, and Labor Market Competition," in NBER working paper 2028; G. Borjas, "The Labor Demand Curve Is Downward Sloping: Reexamining the Impact of Immigration on the Labor Market," in *Quarterly Journal of Economics* 118 (2003): 1335–74; G. Borjas, "Increasing the Supply of Labor through Immigration: Measuring the Impact on Native Workers" (Washington, D.C.: Center for Immigration Studies, 2004); Randy Capps and Michael Fix, *Trends in the Low-Wage Immigrant Labor Force, 2000–2005* (Washington, D.C.: Urban Institute, 2007); Daniel S. Hammermesh and Frank D. Bean, *Help or Hindrance: The Economic Implication of Immigration for African Americans* (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 1998); Andrew Sum, Paul Harrington, and Ishwar Khatiwada, *The Impact of New Immigrants on Young Native-Born Workers, 2000–2005* (Washington, D.C.: Center for Immigration Studies, 2006).

33. De Vasconcelos, *Sending Money Home*; Dougherty, "Riding the Rising Wave"; Humphreys, *Multicultural Economy*; Humphreys and Hall, *African American, Asian, Hispanic, and Native American*.

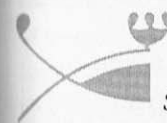
34. This methodology began by computing a net impact ratio for the state as a whole. This is a simple ratio of estimated state Hispanic buying power to calculated Hispanic total state economic impact. The ratio was 1.101 in 2004 (including the 20 percent buying power reduction for remittances, etc.). We then multiplied the buying power of each county by this ratio to simulate what the Hispanic economic impact on the county would be if it followed Hispanic state buying power multipliers. The difference between the potential impact and the IMPLAN software calculated economic impact is the estimated total economic impact (business revenues) leakage.

CHAPTER SIX

Race, Migration, and Labor Control

*Neoliberal Challenges to Organizing
Mississippi's Poultry Workers*

ANGELA C. STUESSE



Severiano, a twenty-two-year-old Tzotzil speaker from Chiapas, spends his days hanging live chickens by their feet on a conveyor belt in a poultry-processing plant in rural Mississippi. In 2003 he paid a "coyote" two thousand U.S. dollars to bring him from Tamaulipas, Mexico, and today he hangs a staggering fifty birds per minute. He sends 85 percent of his earnings home, where he says he will start a small business when he returns to his rancho. Less than a minute down the line from him in the plant, Lillie, a single African American mother in her thirties, separates livers from gizzards of the same birds as she wipes the sweat from her forehead and tries to ignore the dull pain in her forearms that worsens by the day. She glances at the brown men all around her, speaking a language she doesn't understand, and she wonders what brought them here. Still farther down the line stands forty-seven-year-old Ernesto, who was a bank teller in Argentina. Now in the United States, he shares a dilapidated trailer with his wife, their two children, and three coworkers from South America. He works in 40-degree temperatures deboning chicken breasts for \$6.25 an hour. His tourist visa expired a few years ago, but no one seems to care. If he's lucky, he says, he'll never go back; Mississippi is home now.

Race, Migration, and the Transformation of the Rural South

The poultry-processing industry in the United States, located predominantly in the South, has gone through a radical transformation in recent decades.¹ Today Americans eat almost twice as much chicken per capita (89.1 pounds annually) than they did in 1980 (48.0 pounds), and as consumption skyrocketed the industry began massive recruitment of foreign-born labor.² Whereas traditionally local whites and (later) African Americans supplied the industry's labor power,

in many areas today Latino migrants constitute the majority of workers.³ As of 2000, Latinos represented 29 percent of all meat-processing workers, in comparison to only 9 percent twenty years prior, and 82 percent of these “Hispanic” laborers are foreign born.⁴ In fact, over 50 percent of the nation’s quarter-million poultry workers are now immigrants.⁵ This phenomenon has stimulated dramatic social and cultural changes in rural communities across the South, which are just beginning to be examined by academics, organizers, and policy makers alike.

Although immigration is not new to the South or even to Mississippi, the intensity and breadth of recent transnational migrant flows is novel. The historically rooted Black-white racial binary continues to frame social relations in this region, and the recent arrival of Latinos to rural areas complicates traditional hierarchies. Most rural southern communities have limited infrastructure to support the integration of new migrants, and many residents know little about newcomers’ cultures and reasons for migrating. Similarly, the migrant pool itself is heterogeneous, and migrants are often unaware of the particular histories and identities of their coworkers from other parts of Latin America. Many also lack knowledge of the social and political histories of the South and often find it difficult to empathize with the life experiences of their coworkers and neighbors who are often African American. A great need exists for anthropological research that investigates the transnationalization of this region, its relationship to capital and labor, and this phenomenon’s human implications for established southern communities as well as new immigrant groups.

Mississippi is both the poorest state in the nation and one of the world’s leading producers of chicken, selling more than \$2.2 billion in poultry products annually.⁶ It is also the most recent southern state to feel the effects of the poultry industry’s recruitment of transnational labor, as busloads of Latinos began arriving only ten years ago, in the mid-1990s. Scott County is the principal poultry-producing area in Mississippi, with eleven processing plants there and in surrounding counties as of 2005. Scott County is also home to the state’s greatest concentration of Latinos, a demographic shift driven by a family-owned poultry plant that began recruiting workers through its institutionalized Hispanic Project in 1993.⁷ The 2000 U.S. Census, which substantially undercounted immigrants in Mississippi, reported 1,643 people of Hispanic origin living in Scott County, as compared to only 141 people one decade before, representing an increase of over 1,000 percent.⁸ In 2004 the census bureau counted 1,891 Hispanic residents in Scott County, or 6.6 percent of the county’s total population, and the vast majority of these were foreign born.⁹ In contrast, over two-thirds of Mississippi’s counties reported that Hispanics comprised 1.5

percent of their population or less. As suggested by the epigraph at the head of this chapter, Scott County’s Latino population is exceptionally diverse, representing over a dozen countries. The largest groups come from Mexico (almost exclusively from the new sending regions of southeastern Mexico), Guatemala (predominantly the department of San Marcos), Argentina, and Peru.¹⁰ The diversity of Mississippi’s foreign born goes beyond questions of nationality, as ethnic, racial, linguistic, gender, class, and educational differences also create divisions and tensions within and between migrant groups.

Although obstacles such as pervasive poverty, institutionalized racism, legislation that favors corporations, and the undocumented legal status of many in the workforce discourage workers from claiming and exercising their rights in the contemporary South, Mississippi is an important case study because it possesses a rich history of community organizing, particularly during, but not limited to, the African American freedom struggle of the 1950s and 1960s.¹¹ More recently, there has been limited but significant labor-organizing activity within the state’s poultry-producing region. Ongoing poultry worker justice efforts there include those of the Mississippi Immigrants’ Rights Alliance (MIRA) and MPOWER (formerly the Mississippi Poultry Workers’ Center), both of which have identified the importance of cultivating relationships between workers of different backgrounds, specifically among African Americans and new immigrants, in order to achieve greater power and voice within the industry.¹²

In this chapter I examine how different groups’ discourses about race and national origin create obstacles to collective movements for change within the Mississippi poultry industry. These discourses depend largely on stereotypes promoted by state, corporate, and other social actors and nourished by the lack of communication and mutual understanding that plagues Mississippi’s poultry workers. They are also rationalized by the everyday lived experience of working in poultry plants, which often separate workers along these very lines of difference into distinct departments, lines, and shifts. Beliefs about difference based on race and national origin—which function to differentiate one’s own group from the cultural Other—are increasingly being manipulated by the industry to keep the workforce divided.¹³ This case illustrates the complex ways in which the exploitation of discourses that perpetuate racial stereotypes is a conscious and deliberate practice of corporations used to control, fragment, and divide working people along lines of difference for the benefit of corporate profit. Indeed, it has become an essential part of the cultural logic of neoliberalism—“a programme of the methodical destruction of collectives.”¹⁴ Interrogating how these racialized discourses are wielded through the practices of Mississippi’s poultry industry and through the subjectivities of workers of

diverse backgrounds provides a window of understanding into the workings of neoliberal globalization and its consequences for the collective power of working people in the twenty-first century.

The principal research methods employed for this chapter were participant observation, interviews, and focus groups. Rooted in the school of activist anthropology and emerging from my critical alignment with an explicit political project, my qualitative methods are designed to dovetail with my various collaborators' goals so as to educate, strengthen networks, and build local capacities at the same time they produce data for social analysis.¹⁵ One way I have done this in my research has been to carry out small-group discussions with different contingencies of workers. These focus groups were held separately with Mexican and Central American workers, South American workers, and African American workers, and provided a space for workers of similar backgrounds to discuss pressing workplace concerns, share their experiences and frustrations with one another, talk openly about conceptions of race, national origin, and gender, and brainstorm ways that MPOWER might help them address some of these issues. Many of the insights presented in this chapter surrounding workers' perceptions of one another were shaped through dialogue with the participants of these focus groups.

Neoliberal Globalization and the Restructuring of the Poultry Industry

Since Upton Sinclair's acclaimed *The Jungle* detailed the dangerous and unjust practices of Chicago's meatpacking industry a century ago, little has been written on the social impact of the meat-processing industries.¹⁶ Literature specific to the U.S. poultry industry is even harder to obtain, although some information can be obtained from periodical articles, memoirs, popular literature, legal proceedings, and policy reports.¹⁷ Few social scientists have published research analyzing the intersections of culture with political economy in this industry.¹⁸

Globalization theorists today identify qualitative differences in the ways in which the world economy operates, and they have labeled this phenomenon "globalization."¹⁹ Whether it is conceptualized as a "speeding up" or a "stretching out," globalization theory understands time and space as having been reconfigured through the conditions of postmodernity.²⁰ Social and cultural relations are fundamentally disembedded from traditional spatially bound contexts and reinscribed in specific locales across the globe.²¹ These locales are determined by the routes of transnational capital, as people and ideas are deterritorialized and reterritorialized.²² Today's migrants are more than laborers; they are social

actors that maintain economic, social, and political relationships in both their home countries and their countries of settlement.²³

In this transnational present, the hypermobility of capital and labor provide new opportunities for capitalist exploitation and regulation of low-income communities and individuals.²⁴ Like classic liberalism, the neoliberalism of the current moment suggests that the state should interfere as little as possible with the market, allowing its "invisible hand" to guide economic, political, and social relationships.²⁵ However, unlike the liberalism of the earlier twentieth century, today's economic, cultural and political logic is fuelled by the transnational processes described above, suggesting that the term "neoliberal globalization" may more accurately describe the dynamics currently at play.

Although the neoliberal paradigm indicates that the state should not impede the market flows of advanced capitalism, I am not suggesting that the state is not a key actor within neoliberal globalization. On the contrary, the state clearly wields its regulation powers in order to allow capitalist logic to govern society.²⁶ At the federal, state, and local levels the state both sets policy and controls enforcement related to two realms of governance directly affecting poultry workers in Mississippi: labor and immigration (in addition to commerce, taxation, housing, education, health care, public benefits, infrastructure, and a myriad of other policy areas that affect both U.S.- and foreign-born working people). Transnational migrants' abilities to come to the United States and get hired to work in low-wage manufacturing and service sectors, two critical factors in the poultry industry's (and the nation's) prosperity in the twenty-first century, are a direct result of the state's strategic passage and enforcement of legislation that governs these social realms. In addition, the state intervenes through free trade and structural adjustment policies that have flourished in the age of neoliberal globalization and have had irreversible effects on countries throughout Latin America, pushing small farmers and working people to migrate to the United States in search of economic survival.²⁷ The state's actions and inactions, through its neoliberal policies and strategic wielding of law enforcement, clearly benefit corporations at the expense of low-wage workers, thus allowing the "invisible hand" to tighten its grip on social relations.

The U.S. poultry industry is a critical site for studying the changing effects of neoliberal globalization on local subjectivities because its innovative labor control practices are increasingly embraced as a model by other industries aiming to boost profits in the economy of advanced capitalism.²⁸ Neoliberal globalization has played a fundamental role in the restructuring of industry from a Fordist regime to a post-Fordist model of "flexible accumulation," in which corporate strategies such as outsourcing, contracting, part-time employment,

and recruitment of migrant workers allow for greater capital accumulation.²⁹ Its mark on the poultry industry is perhaps most evident in corporations' abilities to harness labor market flexibility and control, readily available through the technologies of postmodernity's "time-space compression" and embodied in the immigrant workers now living throughout rural Mississippi.³⁰ Whereas in the past an individual might spend the majority of his or her working years with one company, gradually accruing seniority, benefits, and company loyalty over time, today's poultry industry displays little concern for worker retention.

Native and immigrant workers alike complain of a myriad of unjust practices in the poultry industry, including unpaid wages, denial of bathroom breaks, dangerous conditions that cause chronic injuries and illnesses, unauthorized paycheck deductions, abuse by plant supervisors and management, deceptive use of labor contractors, discrimination, and sexual harassment.³¹ Jobs have been "deskilled" and production has been accelerated through massive technological advances, so that the average worker now repeats the same monotonous—and often dangerous—movement up to 30,000 times per day. As a direct result, repetitive-motion injuries now plague the workforce. Plants are often out of compliance with federal safety and health regulations, and the government agency charged with oversight of these laws, the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA), is appallingly underresourced and, consequently, largely ineffective.³² Management frequently discourages workers from seeing doctors or filing workers' compensation claims for on-the-job injuries.³³ In addition, in a recent national survey the U.S. Department of Labor found violations of federal minimum wage laws in 100 percent of poultry plants, while the industry's corporate earnings have risen more than 300 percent since 1987.³⁴ It is not surprising then that annual turnover of workers is as high as 300 percent annually in some locations. Aside from their claim to being the only major employer in many rural towns, poultry companies give their workers virtually no incentive to stay.

Such incentives, however, are unnecessary in the age of neoliberal globalization, where workers, recruited from across the world, are literally expendable and infinitely replaceable. "Workforce flexibility" is secured through the use of transnational workers, a strategy employed to weaken the potential for collective bargaining with an organized labor force, put downward pressure on wages, maximize profits, and show local (often Black) workers the "meaning of a 'work ethic.'" Labor scholar David Griffith points out that

low wage labor forces in the U.S. do not just emerge, naturally, as responses to market conditions. Instead, they are constructed, reorganized, and maintained by means of a few common practices. . . . Each of these practices also

depends on the development and use of myths about specific kinds of workers as compared to others, particularly myths about "the work ethic." By looking at these processes of constructing labor forces, we can more fully understand how low-wage industries come to use new immigrants, minorities, and other workers considered "marginal."³⁵

The industry's increasing reliance on the most marginal of workers—recent immigrants—demonstrates its shrewd understanding of the workings of our globalized, neoliberal present.

Challenges to Organizing Mississippi's Poultry Workers across Difference

Bobby Robertson, an African American former poultry worker and leader at one union local that represents poultry workers in processing plants in Central Mississippi, has witnessed the rapid Latinization of his surroundings.³⁶ Except for his brief time in the military, which allowed him to travel the world and witness different ways of life, Robertson has been in Mississippi since he was a teenager. He had worked in a poultry-processing plant for many years when, in the mid-1990s, his coworkers began to organize for their workplace rights and sought to find union representation. Robertson joined in the campaign, became an active union member, and eventually became business manager of the union local. He recalls, after a long uphill battle, when the plants began to heavily recruit immigrant workers—an industry tactic that he says displaced Black workers and significantly weakened the union's membership and bargaining power. Robertson's initial response was to organize an intense union campaign to force the plant's management to stop hiring foreign-born labor. He soon realized, however, that while he might succeed in getting one migrant fired, another person, speaking a language he didn't understand, would soon be standing in that worker's place. Over time Robertson eventually acknowledged that he and his mostly African American coworkers could do very little to keep new migrants from arriving. He recognized that if the labor movement in Central Mississippi were to survive, it would have to embrace new strategies of organizing to defend the rights of *all* poultry workers.

The task Robertson set for himself was challenging, not only because of the lack of local understanding about immigration and immigrants, but also because he was unable to communicate with these new potential union members. When he acknowledged that he "needed somebody who could speak Mexican," his union's international office responded by sending a bilingual organizer to work with him for a few weeks. The knowledge gained from being able to

communicate with immigrant workers, albeit briefly, convinced Robertson that his organizing efforts must work to bridge differences of race, language, and national origin. Robertson's union and other workers' rights organizations in Mississippi have taken up this objective in recent years and have begun looking for ways to increase worker unity across difference.

Supporting local leaders like Robertson in the struggle to bring together immigrant and nonimmigrant poultry workers in defense of their rights are MIRA and MPOWER. MIRA is a statewide coalition of immigrant and civil rights advocates that works closely with progressive elected officials to encourage the legislature and other state institutions to adopt immigrant-friendly policies. MIRA's founders emphasize the importance of bringing organized labor and progressive churches—always a crucial partnership for organizing in the South—together in the struggle for social justice, and the organization maintains strong ideological links between its work today and the efforts of Mississippi's civil rights workers of the 1960s. African Americans, particularly in the state legislature, have been key participants in MIRA's campaigns and are central to the struggle for immigrant rights in Mississippi.³⁷ MPOWER is "a collaboration among poultry workers of diverse backgrounds, civil rights and immigrants' rights organizations, religious leaders, labor unions, employment justice groups, and other community partners." It "aims to increase workers' and advocates' abilities to ensure equity and justice on the job and in our communities by developing leadership among workers, strengthening [their] capacity to organize collectively, enhancing our access to knowledge, skills and resources, [and] building relationships across differences of race, culture, gender, language and religious affiliation."³⁸ The goals of bridging differences in ideology, strategy, and identity in the fight for worker justice are explicit in MPOWER's mission statement and exhibited through the intentional relationship and leadership building that has taken place there in recent years.

The principles espoused by Bobby Robertson, MIRA, and MPOWER suggest that the debate between theorists who sustain that collective organizing is best achieved through the classic Marxist approach that foregrounds socioeconomic class and those who argue for a politics of identity, which valorizes cultural differences such as race, ethnicity, and gender is no longer relevant.³⁹ Class is but one of a number of intersecting and ever-shifting axes of identity formation, and identities are multiply constituted and should be understood as such when theorizing collective political mobilization.⁴⁰ Communities live both in accommodation with and antagonism to the effects of capitalism, at times maintaining hegemonic discourses and at times resisting them. The collective actions and rights claims of new social movements reflect these contradictions as their struggles play out within the fissures in the system.

"Hispanics": Perceptions of Differences and Similarities among Latino Workers

As indicated at the outset of this chapter, the Latino population in Central Mississippi is tremendously diverse. The largest transnational group hails from Mexico's states of Veracruz, Chiapas, and Oaxaca.⁴¹ Mostly men between the ages of fifteen and forty, these individuals send high percentages of their earnings home to wives, children, and parents and plan to return to Mexico after a few years in the United States. They are highly mobile, moving regularly between Mississippi and agriculture or construction jobs elsewhere in the United States and Mexico, and often participate in circular migratory patterns.⁴²

Another contingent of workers comes from Central America, mainly Guatemala. They tend to be single indigenous men (and increasingly women) in their teens and early twenties from one particular *municipio* in the highlands. More and more have found partners and had children in Mississippi. Although when asked most say they will return to Guatemala in five years or so, only a handful have yet done so.⁴³ While they come mainly in search of economic opportunity, the political situation in Guatemala and other Central American countries is an additional incentive to migrate north. Because these migrants are almost exclusively indigenous, many arrive in Mississippi already multilingual, speaking both their native Mayan language, Mam, and Spanish. Because of their experience as second-language learners, they tend to pick up English quickly, providing them greater opportunities for upward mobility in the poultry plants.

There are also significant numbers of poultry workers in Mississippi from Argentina and Peru. A good portion of these men and women were blue- and white-collar professionals in their countries, and most brought their families with them to the United States. They arrived by air on tourist visas during the first years of the twenty-first century and stayed because of growing economic crises in their home countries. Nearly all first lived in Miami before being recruited to Mississippi by the poultry companies. Back home some of these workers have significant experience with labor unions, providing them with valuable knowledge and experience in organizing. Few South American migrants plan to return home, however, at least in the short to medium term. They often say Mississippi is a safe, quiet place to raise a family, and some have even purchased homes and established relationships within the local white community.

While these are just some of the many differences among Latinos of diverse backgrounds, native Mississippians tend to lump them all into one category, that of "Hispanic." When asked their thoughts on the term during focus group discussions, different groups of Latino poultry workers have very different reactions. In a discussion held with Mexican and Central American migrants,

participants generally found the “Hispanic” classification useful, observing that all immigrant workers face similar problems in the poultry plants and thus can justly be considered one group. “I think it’s a good term because it gives us a bigger group, and there is strength in numbers,” stated one participant.⁴⁴ Another commented, “If we all work together, we can’t be singled out for defending ourselves.” This group reached a general consensus that it doesn’t matter what they’re called, as long as all Latino workers are united. “After all,” one Guatemalan youth pointed out, “the *morenos* [Blacks] and the *bolillos* [whites] think we’re all Mexican anyway.”

South American focus group participants share very different views about being thought of as one homogeneous group. Although they recognize similarities in their experiences in the plants, they adamantly argue against being thought of as the same as Mexican and Central American migrants. Participants compared Mexicans and Central Americans to “machines” and “gypsies.” “They are more humble and submissive [than we are]. They do what they are told without arguing,” explained a middle-aged man from Argentina. Racial stereotypes inform much of what South Americans in Mississippi think about their Central American coworkers, and in this focus group, comments about lack of education and illiteracy quickly escalated to assumptions about the inherent gratification of physical labor and accusations of “ignorance.”

Whereas this discourse linking race and nationality with social Darwinist ideas about submission and work leads some—typically light-skinned South American workers—to distance themselves from their Central American colleagues, other focus group participants highlighted the structural, as opposed to genetic or biological, nature of the differences between these groups: “Because they plan to go home,” a younger Peruvian man reasoned, “they are more likely to work hard and complain less. They know their situation is temporary, which makes it easier to put up with abuse.” Despite being quick to identify these differences, South Americans also recognize similarities they hold with Central American and Mexican coworkers, particularly their inability to communicate with English speakers, their vulnerability as undocumented workers, and the exploitation suffered in working the most dangerous and lowest-paid jobs.

African American Workers’ Discourse about Their “Hispanic” Coworkers

Ironically, many African Americans in this study hold beliefs about Hispanics as a whole that are not unlike many South Americans’ portrayals of Mexicans and Central Americans: “Hispanics are too willing to work for nothing,” one often hears, “and they’re taking our jobs and forcing us to work even harder.”

Comments such as this are valid assessments of many workers’ lived realities, yet they fall short of recognizing the complex social and economic realities faced by a transnational workforce. They do not illuminate, for example, the fact that many migrants work to support their families and send substantial sums of money back home. Through this practice low wages by U.S. standards translate into relatively high wages for the social reproduction of families in “sending communities.” As David Griffith writes, “a black American’s definition of subsistence and consequent wage needs are likely to be qualitatively and quantitatively distinct from a new immigrant Mexican’s or an Indian fleeing the Central American ethnic wars.”⁴⁵

Comments that blame immigrant workers for the increased exploitation of native minorities also obscure the role of the state—through restrictive yet poorly enforced U.S. immigration policies, nearly nonexistent worker protections, multinational structural adjustment programs across the “developing” world, and the expansion of advanced capitalism across the globe—in stimulating a continued flow of undocumented transnational migrants to the United States to provide a virtually limitless supply of cheap labor that benefits the interests of corporations. Without this political analysis critics inaccurately place the responsibility for neoliberal exploitation on workers instead of on corporations and governments. With or without structural explanations, however, material realities indicate that in much of Mississippi’s poultry industry Black workers *are* being indirectly displaced by immigrant laborers, who, in large part, are inclined to work hard and keep quiet because of their vulnerable status as undocumented workers and the “bootstrap” ideology that immigrants often espouse.⁴⁶

Poultry plant executives are exploiting immigrant vulnerability and encouraging competition with locally born and mostly African American workers by employing a number of increasingly pervasive industry practices. Most notably they are recruiting more and more of their workforce through transnational social and familial networks, decreasing the need to depend on local labor. Network recruitment has been studied in depth by labor scholars and is one main vehicle for cultivating a fragmented workforce.⁴⁷ Both industry and the state depend on these networks to supplement the costs of maintaining and reproducing labor power by requiring migrant workers to “self-subsidize” through overcrowded housing and other cost-sharing strategies.⁴⁸

The increasing use of labor contractors is another growing industry practice that segments the workforce, weakens the power of Black workers, and enables poultry plants to manipulate and evade government regulations to their advantage. In Mississippi some plants use contractors to hire large portions of their undocumented workforce. By claiming not to be these workers’ employers

plants can, at least superficially, insulate themselves from state sanctions for illegal employment practices.⁴⁹ The use of contractors also gives rise to higher turnover rates, further depresses workers' wages and working conditions, and weakens unions because contract workers—often those most in need of workplace protections—are typically not included in the collective bargaining unit.

When Black workers complain that “Hispanics” are overly docile, eager to please, and too willing to work for low wages, their concerns reflect an acute awareness that whites' descriptions of immigrants as “hard workers” are often accompanied by references to African American workers as “lazy” or lacking a strong “work ethic.” Indeed, in research conducted in Scott County by historian Laura E. Helton, one white woman asserted, “[The immigrants] have been so much more workable and willing than blacks. They are much more humble and don't feel like the world owes them something.” A Black elected official also pointed out to Helton: “[Immigrants] were brought in for cheap labor, not a shortage [as the industry claims]. . . . The labor's here but the jobs don't want to pay.”⁵⁰ According to this alternative discourse, the hiring of immigrant labor is not simply a race-neutral labor practice to fill “empty” plant positions, but instead serves to put downward pressure on native workers' salaries and weaken attempts at organizing around workplace issues. Some Black workers, instead of blaming migrants for these conditions, empathize with them, reasoning, as one aging woman did, “They's where we was at fifty years ago before we even knew our rights.” Even sympathetic analyses that draw parallels between the conditions that gave rise to the Civil Rights Movement and the problems faced by today's migrants are rarely linked to a broader understanding of advanced capitalism's impact on other locales across the globe. This void, accompanied by most Mississippians' inability to communicate in Spanish and limited knowledge about Latin America and its transnational migrants, hinders Black workers from building meaningful relationships with foreign-born coworkers.

Latino Workers' Discourse about Black Coworkers

Most Latinos in Mississippi are new to the United States and know very little about the histories of racial oppression and economic exclusion faced by people of color in this country. Just as their African American coworkers often lack an understanding of the structural causes of their presence, they, too, frequently fail to link local processes to larger social and political formations. Although migrants in Mississippi witness firsthand that most of their African American neighbors are poor, most typically accept the dominant discourse espoused by popular culture and neoliberal policy that blames poor Black communities for their socioeconomic condition. In my research I have come across very few

migrants who recognize that Blacks in the United States and beyond live with an ongoing legacy of institutional racism, particularly in housing, education, and employment.⁵¹ Without a solid analysis of the structural constraints impeding the progress of working people of color in the United States, Latino poultry workers often find it difficult to empathize with Black workers' complaints and responses to workplace problems.

U.S.-born workers' everyday forms of resistance, such as production slowdowns, the taking of long breaks, or even spitting on the processing line—all commonplace forms of covert resistance among workers—are usually misinterpreted by immigrants in Mississippi's poultry plants.⁵² Similarly, expressions of apathy among African Americans are read out of context. The educational, employment, and justice systems in the United States continue to fail people of color, leading critical race scholars to suggest that, because of shrinking job opportunities, African Americans are becoming increasingly pessimistic about social justice issues.⁵³ Without this analysis, however, both resistance and apathy are misinterpreted by new migrants—as well as by plant management and dominant society—as laziness, poor manners, and lack of education.⁵⁴

Throughout my research I have been troubled to find that deeply ingrained anti-Black and anti-indigenous racism among Latinos of diverse backgrounds seriously challenge efforts at crossracial organizing. During focus group discussions, for example, Latino workers were asked to identify similarities between the problems they have at work and those experienced by African Americans in the plants. Surprisingly, participants responded by suggesting that Black workers have no workplace complaints: “Most Blacks like how things are,” “Blacks have no problem with discrimination,” and “We are living in different worlds” were just a few of the comments offered. These comments suggest that Latino workers see themselves as the authentic exploited class of workers, incomparable to the presumed more privileged African Americans in the plants.

This discourse, like that of Black workers about immigrant workers, is promoted by industry practices that harness racial stereotypes so as to divide the workforce along lines of race and nationality and to obscure workers' abilities to find linkages in common experiences. These procedures are illustrated by comments heard regularly throughout my research, such as: “Supervisors are more lenient with Blacks than with us—they're allowed to wear jewelry, for example”; “Blacks can take long breaks and are not disciplined when they come to work late”; “Some workers are permitted to use the bathroom when needed, where others are denied bathroom breaks”; “Blacks are allowed to complain directly to management, and we're expected to go through plant translators and our supervisors”; and “A supervisor told me that Blacks don't like Hispanics.” Although some of these differential forms of treatment may be implemented by

abusive supervisors acting independently, this double standard—in which certain groups of workers are permitted, even encouraged, to abuse privileges—has become commonplace in the poultry industry across the South in order to alienate one group of disenfranchised workers from another.⁵⁵ In the “Right-to-Work” South, where new immigrant workers are less likely to know their rights, more likely to be employed through a labor contractor, and unquestionably vulnerable, this tactic has worked remarkably well.

Conclusions, Promises, and Prospects for Change

In recent decades the poultry industry has increasingly become vertically integrated, whereby a few giant producers now oversee every step of the production process, “from fertilization of the eggs through hatching through ‘grow-out’ to market weight and on through slaughter and processing.”⁵⁶ Offsetting the possibilities of increased class solidarity that might be expected to accompany this shift, the industry has also begun massive network recruitment of foreign-born workers and is escalating and perfecting its labor control strategies. From utilizing third-party labor contractors to selectively rationing bathroom breaks to prohibiting talking on the production line, poultry plants are taking advantage of the realities of Mississippi’s transnational present in order to intensify disparities and encourage competing discourses between African American and Latino workers, and even among Latinos of different national and ethnic origins. The framework of neoliberal globalization helps to better appreciate how such industrial restructuring exploits racialized practices and discourses in order to mold local subjectivities, and ethnographic analysis of poultry workers’ perceptions and lived realities involving racial stereotypes gives us a deeper understanding of how advanced capitalism is affecting social relations and workers’ potential to organize in Mississippi’s poultry region today.

Recent contributions of critical race and social movement theorists point toward approaches that might begin to overcome some of the divisions among poultry workers outlined in this chapter. Scholarship that helps us better understand these challenges is an important first step in building long-term coalitions that respect, not erase, our differences. Both MPOWER and MIRA assert that, despite industry efforts to divide workers along lines of difference, people of all backgrounds hold basic employment, civil, and human rights. They not only recognize the abuse of these rights as the basis for coalition building, they also respect that poultry workers experience and interpret these abuses in unique ways depending on their identities, experiences, and goals. Moving beyond strictly class-based politics as well as past any exclusionary interpretations of the politics of identity, these groups seek to build alliances among

different marginalized groups in hopes that they might gain the knowledge and power to demand social and economic justice.

Despite operating within racialized discourses that discourage communication, mutual understanding, and structural analysis, many poultry workers are eager to get to know each other better. In focus group discussions, workers of all backgrounds were receptive when facilitators dispelled some of the myths leading to misunderstandings, saying, for example, “oh, you mean *they* have problems too?” Participants often offered ideas for how MPOWER could help them begin to bridge cultural and racial differences.⁵⁷ They suggested that MPOWER could simply be a safe space in which workers of different backgrounds would be welcome to find information, share experiences, and get to know one another. This is a critical contribution in the South, where virtually no public gathering spaces exist outside of churches. Gatherings could be held, participants explained, in which Latino and African American workers could share each others’ food and music and communicate via simultaneous interpreters to learn more about each others’ lives, families, problems, and dreams.

In 2005 MPOWER (then the Mississippi Poultry Workers’ Center) began to turn these suggestions into realities, creating a diverse worker-led Leadership Council, building programs around issues concerning workers of all backgrounds (such as its Workplace Injury Project), and developing popular education curricula that tie local experiences to global processes. It piloted Power and Oppression workshops to teach participants about their own and other groups’ social and political histories and help them build an analysis of their common struggles and shared vision for the future. It also began offering English and Spanish classes with a focus on poultry workers’ rights, thus beginning to bridge communication barriers while building a common language for collective mobilization. Although MPOWER is still young and political change happens gradually, perhaps one day in the not-too-distant future poultry workers in Mississippi might be able to smile when they recount the story of one organizer’s uneasy plea, once upon a time, for someone who could help him “speak Mexican.”

Notes

Earlier versions of this chapter have been published in Spanish and English. See Angela C. Stuesse, “Hablando ‘mexicano’: La restructuración industrial y los desafíos para la organización a través de la diferencia en un Mississippi transnacional,” *Estudios migratorios latinoamericanos* 17, no. 52 (2003): 603–26; and Angela C. Stuesse, “Poultry Processing, People’s Politics: Industrial Restructuring and Organizing across Difference in a Transnational Mississippi,” in *Mexican Immigration to the U.S. Southeast: Impact and*

Challenges. Proceedings, Symposium on Mexican Immigration to the U.S. Southeast, Mary Odem and Elaine Lacy, eds. (Atlanta: Instituto de México, 2005).

1. Eight of the top ten poultry-producing states in the United States are located in the region traditionally referred to as the South. The top four—Georgia, Arkansas, Alabama, and Mississippi—all form part of the geographical, cultural, and historical subregion known as the Deep South.

2. Delmarva Poultry Industry, "Per Capita Consumption of Poultry and Livestock, 1960–2001," Delmarva Poultry Industry, n.d., at <http://www.dpickicken.org/index.cfm?content=facts>; USDA Economic Research Service, "Chicken Consumption Continues Longrun Rise," *Amber Waves*, at <http://www.ers.usda.gov/AmberWaves/April06/Findings/Chicken.htm>.

3. Laura E. Helton and Angela C. Stuesse, "Race, Low-Wage Legacies and the Politics of Poultry Processing: Intersections of Contemporary Immigration and African American Labor Histories in Central Mississippi," paper presented at the Southern Labor Studies Conference, Moving Workers: Migration and the South, Birmingham, Alabama, 2004.

4. William Kandell, "Meat-Processing Firms Attract Hispanic Workers to Rural America," *Amber Waves*, June 2006, at <http://www.ers.usda.gov/AmberWaves/June06/prf/MeatProcessingFeatureJune06.pdf>.

5. Christopher D. Cook, "Fowl Trouble: In the Nation's Poultry Plants, Brutality to Worker as Well as to Bird," *Harper's Magazine* 299 (1999): 78–9. Although immigrant poultry workers in Mississippi are to date almost exclusively Latin American, in other states immigrant poultry workers also come from the Marshall Islands, Laos, Vietnam, and Korea, among other countries. See David C. Griffith, *Jones's Minimal: Low-Wage Labor in the United States* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1993); and Steve Striffler, "Inside a Poultry Processing Plant: An Ethnographic Portrait," *Labor History* 43, no. 3 (2002): 305–313.

6. U.S. Bureau of the Census, "Personal Income Per Capita in Constant (2000) Dollars," in *State Rankings—Statistical Abstract of the United States* (2006), at <http://www.census.gov/statab/ranks/rank29.html>, accessed July 2008; Wallace G. Morgan and Steve Murray, "Economic Impact of the Mississippi Poultry Industry at the Year 2002," Mississippi Agricultural and Forestry Experiment Station, Mississippi State University, information bulletin 385, Jan. 2002, at <http://msucare.com/pubs/infobulletins/ib385.pdf>.

7. After Hurricane Katrina hit the Gulf Coast in 2006, many immigrant workers across Mississippi were recruited to the coast to do cleanup and reconstruction. Coupled with some area poultry companies' recent increased enforcement of federal labor and immigration laws, this demographic concentration may be shifting. See Angela Stuesse, "Pi-enso que Dios me lo puso en el camino: The Industrial Logics and Migrant Recruitment that Transformed Mississippi Poultry," paper presented at the Latin American Studies Association Conference, Montreal, Canada, 2007.

8. U.S. Bureau of the Census, "Scott County, Mississippi, Census 2000 Population, Demographic, and Housing Information: General Demographic Characteristics: 2000";

U.S. Bureau of the Census, "Scott County, Mississippi, General Population and Housing Characteristics: 1990."

9. U.S. Bureau of the Census, "General Profile: Scott, MS," 2004.

10. Advocates report that in the late 1990s Scott County's immigrant population consisted of mostly Cubans, Dominicans, Nicaraguans, and Colombians. The national origin of Mississippi's immigrant poultry workers, then, is changing over time in relation to federal immigration policies, poultry plant labor control practices, and shifts in the local labor market.

11. Taylor Branch, *Parting the Waters: America in the King Years, 1954–63* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1988); David Chalmers, "A Tremor in the Middle of the Iceberg—From a Stone that the Builders Rejected: Black and White in Mississippi," *Reviews in American History* 23, no. 3 (1995): 535–44; John Dittmer, *Local People: The Struggle for Civil Rights in Mississippi* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1994); Susie Erenrich, ed., *Freedom Is a Constant Struggle: An Anthology of the Mississippi Civil Rights Movement* (Washington, D.C.: Cultural Center for Social Change, 1999); Anne Moody, *Coming of Age in Mississippi* (New York: Dell Publishing Company, 1968); Charles M. Payne, *I've Got the Light of Freedom: The Organizing Tradition and the Mississippi Freedom Struggle* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997); Elizabeth Sutherland Martínez, ed., *Letters from Mississippi* (Brookline, Mass.: Zephyr Press, 2002).

12. MPOWER (Mississippi Poultry Workers for Equality and Respect) was originally the Mississippi Poultry Workers' Center (the Workers' Center), a project of the Equal Justice Center. Between 2002 and 2006 I conducted the bulk of my fieldwork in close collaboration with the Workers' Center. In late 2006 the Workers' Center spun off from the Equal Justice Center in the hopes of becoming a more locally run community-based nonprofit organization and changed its name to MPOWER. Throughout this chapter I refer to the organization using its current name, MPOWER, unless otherwise noted. MPOWER can be visited online at www.mpowercenter.org. The Mississippi Immigrants' Rights Alliance (MIRA) can be visited online at www.yourmira.org.

13. This argument is informed by labor scholars' "split labor market theory" (see Donald D. Stull et al., eds., *Any Way You Cut It: Meat Processing and Small-Town America* [Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1995]) and critical race theorists' "intersectionality" theory (Patricia Hill Collins, *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment* [Boston and London: Unwin Hyman, 2000 (1990)]). See also Kimberlé Crenshaw, "Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence against Women of Color," *Stanford Law Review* 43, no. 6 (1991): 1,241–99.

14. Pierre Bourdieu, "A Reasoned Utopia and Economic Fatalism," *New Left Review* 227 (1998): 125–30.

15. Charles R. Hale, "What Is Activist Research?" *Items (Social Science Research Council)* 2, no. 2 (2001): 13–15; Nancy Scheper-Hughes, "The Primacy of the Ethical: Propositions for a Militant Anthropology," *Current Anthropology* 36, no. 3 (1995): 409–20.

16. Notable exceptions include: Deborah Fink, *Cutting into the Meatpacking Line: Workers and Change in the Rural Midwest* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina

Press, 1998); Steve Striffler, *Chicken: The Dangerous Transformation of America's Favorite Food* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 2005); Stull et al., *Any Way You Cut It*.

17. See, for example, Consumers Union, "Chicken: What You Don't Know Can Hurt You," *Consumer Reports* 63, no. 3 (1998): 12–18; Jesse Katz, "The Chicken Trail: How Migrant Latino Workers Put Food on America's Table," *Los Angeles Times*, 10 Nov. 1996; Cedric N. Chatterley et al., *I Was Content and Not Content: The Story of Linda Lord and the Closing of Penobscot Poultry* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2000); Cheri Register, *Packinghouse Daughter: A Memoir* (St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 2000); Eric Schlosser, *Fast Food Nation: The Dark Side of the All-American Meal* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2001); *M. H. Fox et al. v. Tyson Foods, Inc.*, U.S. District Court for the Northern District of Alabama Middle Division, 2001; U.S. Department of Labor, "Year 2000 Poultry Processing Compliance Report," 2000; Human Rights Watch, "Blood, Sweat, and Fear: Workers' Rights in U.S. Meat and Poultry Plants," 2004.

18. Notable exceptions include Griffith 1993, Striffler 2005, and Striffler 2002.

19. For an overview of the seminal literature on globalization theory, see Jonathan X. Inda and Renato Rosaldo, eds., *The Anthropology of Globalization: A Reader* (Malden and Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 2002).

20. David Harvey, *The Condition of Postmodernity* (Ames, Iowa: Wiley-Blackwell, 1990); Anthony Giddens, *The Consequences of Modernity* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1990).

21. Arjun Appadurai, *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996); Frederic Jameson, "Postmodernism, or the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism," *New Left Review* 146 (1984): 53–92.

22. Akhil Gupta and James Ferguson, "Beyond 'Culture': Space, Identity, and the Politics of Difference," *Cultural Anthropology* 7, no. 1 (1992): 6–23; Anna Tsing, "The Global Situation," *Cultural Anthropology* 15, no. 3 (2000): 327–60.

23. Sonia E. Alvarez, Evelina Dagnino, and Arturo Escobar, eds., *Cultures of Politics, Politics of Cultures: Re-Visioning Latin American Social Movements* (Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 1998); Linda Basch, Nina Glick Schiller, and Cristina Szanton Blanc, *Nations Unbound: Transnational Projects, Postcolonial Predicaments, and Deterritorialized Nation-States* (Amsterdam, The Netherlands: Gordon & Breach, 1994); Leo R. Chavez, "The Power of the Imagined Community: The Settlement of Undocumented Mexicans and Central Americans in the United States," *American Anthropologist* 96, no. 1 (1994): 52–73; Leo R. Chavez, "Settlers and Sojourners: The Case of Mexicans in the United States," *Human Organization* 47, no. 2 (1988): 95–109; Michael Kearney, "Borders and Boundaries of State and Self at the End of Empire," *Journal of Historical Sociology* 4, no. 1 (1991): 52–74; Maxine L. Margolis, *An Invisible Minority: Brazilians in New York City* (Needham Heights, Mass.: Allyn & Bacon, 1997); Aihwa Ong, *Flexible Citizenship: The Cultural Logics of Transnationality* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1999); Refael Pérez-Torres, "Nomads and Migrants: Negotiating a Multicultural Postmodernism," *Cultural Critique* 26 (1993–94): 161–89; Patricia R. Pessar, *A Visa for a Dream: Dominicans in the United States* (Needham Heights, Mass.: Allyn & Bacon, 1995); Alejandro Portes, ed., *The Economic Sociology of Immigration: Essays on Networks, Ethnicity and*

Entrepreneurship (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 1998); Roger Rouse, "Mexican Migration and the Social Space of Postmodernism," *Diaspora* 1, no. 1 (1991): 8–23.

24. Ruth W. Gilmore, "Race and Globalization," in *Geographies of Global Change: Remapping the World*, R. J. Johnson et al., eds. (London: Blackwell, 2002), 261–74; R. B. Persaud and C. Lusane, "The New Economy, Globalisation and the Impact on African Americans," *Race and Class* 42, no. 1 (2000): 21–34.

25. Pierre Bourdieu, "The Essence of Neoliberalism: Utopia of Endless Exploitation," *Le Monde Diplomatique* (Dec. 1998), translated by Jeremy J. Shapiro, at <http://mondediplo.com/1998/12/08bourdieu>; Bourdieu, "A Reasoned Utopia and Economic Fatalism."

26. Neil Brenner, "State Theory in the Political Conjuncture: Henri Lefebvre's 'Comments on a New State Form,'" *Antipode* 33, no. 5 (2001): 783–808; J. Petras and H. Veltmeyer, *Globalization Unmasked: Imperialism in the 21st Century* (New York: Zed, 2001); Saskia Sassen, *Globalization and Its Discontents: Essays on the New Mobility of People and Money* (New York: New Press, 1998).

27. Grace Chang, *Disposable Domestic: Immigrant Women Workers in the Global Economy* (Cambridge, Mass.: South End Press, 2000); Joseph E. Stiglitz, *Globalization and Its Discontents* (New York: Norton, 2002).

28. William Boyd and Michael Watts, "Agro-Industrial Just-in-Time: The Chicken Industry and Postwar American Capitalism," in *Globalising Food: Agrarian Questions and Global Restructuring*, ed. David Goodman and Michael Watts (London: Routledge, 1997), 192–225; Griffith, *Jones's Minimal*.

29. Stuart Hall, "The Local and the Global: Globalization and Ethnicity," in *Culture, Globalization and the World System: Contemporary Conditions for the Representation of Identity*, ed. Anthony King (Binghamton: Dept. of Art History, State University of New York at Binghamton, 1991); David Harvey, "Class Relations, Social Justice and the Politics of Difference," in *Place and the Politics of Identity*, ed. M. Keith and S. Pile (New York: Routledge, 1990), 41–66.

30. Harvey, "Class Relations."

31. Data gathered through ethnographic research and collaboration with MPOWER from 2002 to the present.

32. Human Rights Watch, "Blood, Sweat, and Fear: Workers' Rights in U.S. Meat and Poultry Plants," New York, 2004, at www.hrw.org/reports/2005/usao105.

33. Mississippi Poultry Workers' Center, "What You Need to Know If You Are Injured at Work," Morton, Miss., 2008.

34. United Food and Commercial Workers, "A Voice for Working America: Injury and Injustice—America's Poultry Industry," at http://www.ufcw.org/press_room/fact_sheets_and_backgrounder/poultryindustry_.cfm.

35. Griffith, *Jones's Minimal*.

36. Name and identifying information has been changed.

37. Since Hurricane Katrina devastated the Mississippi Gulf Coast in August 2005, MIRA's activities have shifted to focus heavily on this part of the state.

38. MPOWER, "Who We Are," MPOWER, 2008, at <http://www.mpowercenter.org/about>.

39. Marc Edelman, *Peasants against Globalization: Rural Social Movements in Costa Rica* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1999); Harvey, "Class Relations, Social Justice and the Politics of Difference"; Teresa de Lauretis, "Eccentric Subjects: Feminist Theory and Historical Consciousness," *Feminist Studies* 16, no. 1 (1990): 115–50; Arturo Escobar, "Culture, Economics, and Politics in Latin American Social Movements Theory and Research," in *The Making of Social Movements in Latin America: Identity, Strategy, and Democracy*, ed. Arturo Escobar and Sonia E. Alvarez (Boulder, Colo.: Westview, 1992), 62–88; Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy: Towards a Radical Democratic Politics* (London: Verso, 1985).

40. Alvarez, Dagnino, and Escobar, *Cultures of Politics, Politics of Cultures*; Lisa Lowe and David Lloyd, eds., *The Politics of Culture in the Shadow of Capital* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1997), 1–32; Barbara Smith, *The Truth That Never Hurts: Writings on Race, Gender, and Freedom* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 2000); Julia Sudbury, *'Other Kinds of Dreams': Black Women's Organizations and the Politics of Transformation* (London: Routledge, 1998).

41. Angela C. Stuesse, "From One Southeast to Another: Experiences, Challenges, and Resources of Mexican Migrants in Mississippi," paper presented at the Symposium on Mexican Immigration to the U.S. Southeast: Impact and Challenges, sponsored by the Consulate General of Mexico in Atlanta, Instituto de México (Atlanta) Emory University, University of Georgia, Georgia State University, and Kennesaw State University, Atlanta, 2004.

42. Rouse, "Mexican Migration and the Social Space of Postmodernism." Due to federal policies over the last decade that have led to increased enforcement of the U.S.-Mexico border, however, migrants' visits to their home countries are becoming less frequent.

43. Those who have gone home talk regularly about wanting to return to the United States due to lack of economic opportunities in their hometowns.

44. All quotations from Spanish speakers have been translated into English by the author.

45. Griffith, *Jones's Minimal*, 199.

46. For an overview of the immigrant "bootstrap" ideology, see Juan F. Perea, ed., *Immigrants Out!: The New Nativism and the Anti-Immigrant Impulse in the United States* (New York: New York University Press, 1997).

47. Stull et al., *Any Way You Cut It*, 141.

48. Griffith, *Jones's Minimal*, 227.

49. In most cases in Mississippi's poultry plants, these contractors and the plants are legally considered "joint employers," and the plants would likely be found liable in a court of law.

50. Laura Helton, "Three Hundred Strangers Next Door: Native Mississippians Respond to Immigration," *Inter-American Policy Studies Occasional Paper No. 4* (Austin: University of Texas, 2003): 13–14.

51. For more on the contours of institutional racism in the United States, see Kimberlé Crenshaw et al., eds. *Critical Race Theory: The Key Writings That Formed the Movement*

(New York: New Press, 1995); George Lipsitz, *The Positive Investment in Whiteness: How White People Profit from Identity Politics* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1998); Thomas Sugrue, *The Origins of the Urban Crisis: Race and Inequality in Postwar Detroit* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1996).

52. María Patricia Fernández-Kelley, *For We Are Sold, I and My People: Women and Industry on Mexico's Frontier* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1983); James Scott, *Weapons of the Weak: Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1985).

53. Crenshaw, "Mapping the Margins"; Collins, *Black Feminist Thought*, 59.

54. Helton and Stuesse, "Race, Low-Wage Legacies"; Arthur D. Murphy et al., eds., *Latino Workers in the Contemporary South* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2001).

55. Griffith, *Jones's Minimal*; Stull et al., *Any Way You Cut It*.

56. Stull et al., *Any Way You Cut It*, 55. Proponents of vertical integration argue that it is efficient and made the industry what it is today, but its critics argue that it effectively "placed a ninety million dollar industry in the hands of only five companies" (Chatterley et al., *I Was Content and Not Content*, 99). Family businesses were eventually bought out by corporations, and even "independent" farmers are heavily regulated and do not ever technically own the birds they raise.

57. Some focus groups were carried out in collaboration with Anita Grabowski and David Mandel-Anthony, students at the University of Texas at Austin. See Grabowski, "La Pollera," and David G. Mandel-Anthony, "From Comitancillo to Carthage, Mississippi: Activist Research, Transnationalism, and Racial Formation in a Community of Guatemalan Mam Poultry Workers," honor's thesis, University of Texas, 2005.