

jointly sponsored by the University of Toronto and the American Academy of Arts and Sciences. The article begins with the premise that scarcity of resources is the root cause of many internal conflicts within Third World countries. Environmental degradation, population growth and unequal distribution of resources can exacerbate these scarcities, and violent conflict is often the result. Social upheaval and large-scale human migration are by-products of these conflicts.

While this article is easily accessible to most readers, it contains a number of simplifications that seem unjustified. First, the primary problem is identified as "scarcity," and unequal distribution of resources is seen as merely one aspect of this. There is a fundamental difference between natural scarcity, and poverty caused by highly unequal consumption patterns within and among societies. This distinction is not made. Second, resource scarcity and environmental degradation are portrayed mainly as causes of social conflict and human migration, and seldom depicted as outcomes of conflict and migration, which they often are. Third, the international dimension, specifically the historical and contemporary power differential among states and regions, is almost completely ignored.

By contrast, *Environment Under Fire* provides an excellent overview of the social, political and economic aspects of environmental degradation. Out of necessity, Faber's work does not address all the various sites of environmental problems, however, he illustrates the general trends and tendencies effectively, by using well selected areas of focus. ■

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Book Reviews: On Flight and Exile

W. George Lovell

Allan F. Burns, *Maya in Exile: Guatemalans in Florida*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press. Tables. Photographs. Bibliography. Index. xvii, 208 pp. Paper. \$14.95 (US). ISBN 1-56639-062-2.

Norita Vlach, *The Quetzal in Flight: Guatemalan Refugee Families in the United States*. Westport, CT: Praeger Publishers, 1992. Tables. Figures. Appendixes. Notes. Bibliography. Index. xxii, 175 pp. Cloth. \$42.95 (US). ISBN 0-275-93979-0.

Civil war has raged in Guatemala, off and on, for the better part of three decades. Armed confrontation between government security forces and guerrilla insurgents was sporadic in the 1960s, lulled somewhat in the 1970s, and reached levels of horrific intensity in the 1980s. The statistics are chilling: some one hundred thousand killed, forty thousand "disappeared" (more than any country of Latin America), over two hundred thousand refugees in Mexico alone, and an estimated one million people displaced internally, out of a national population of between eight million and nine million, during the holocaust years of the early 1980s. Statistics, of course, afford only a remote, impersonal glimpse of a tragedy that continues to unfold. Violence in Guatemala is also responsible for the appearance of displaced Guatemalans on the contemporary American scene: thousands of Guatemalans, many of them Maya Indians, now live and work in Florida and in California, picking fruit and vegetables in the fields near Indiantown and Immokalee, cleaning houses, serving food and sewing garments in Los Angeles and in San Francisco. Accounting for the Guatemalan presence in two very different U.S. settings is the worthy goal of the recent books by Allan F. Burns and Norita Vlach.

Burns describes his book as "a mix of applied research and advocacy," one that "combines a traditional social science approach with a dialogic, in-

terpretive style" (pp 19-20). A professor of anthropology and Latin American studies at the University of Florida, Burns focuses on how the Kanjobal Maya refugees have adapted to life far from their native Guatemala in aptly named Indiantown, Florida. Chapter One situates the Maya in cultural and historical context, outlining the deteriorating sequence of events that caused them to flee their homeland in the early 1980s. Chapter Two informs us that by the end of that decade, some fifteen to twenty thousand Mayas had taken up residence, for the most part illegally, throughout Florida; an estimated five thousand in Indiantown. Chapter Three examines aspects of Maya social life in Indiantown, with Burns revealing a vibrant and proud sense of community. Chapters Four and Five document the economic activities of Maya workers, charting their uneasy coexistence in and around Indiantown alongside other migrant workers, especially Mexicans and Haitians. In Chapter Six the characteristics of American Maya identity as opposed to Guatemalan Maya identity are explored, with Burns observing that differences are most likely to emerge in relation to residence, work, leadership, religion and communication. Chapter Seven provides Burns with a platform to demonstrate his expertise in the field of visual anthropology, for in addition to authoring texts on Maya life in exile, Burns has produced four video programs on the subject. His concluding chapter, "Always Maya," confirms what dozens of ethnographic studies argue, that the Maya are strategic innovators skilled in the art of making changes to preserve essentials.

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A distinctive feature of Burns' writing style is to allow the protagonists to speak for themselves. Maya voices, among others, are heard throughout in the first person singular, which means that the reader also becomes a privileged listener. Much of what is narrated reverberates for some time, testimony to Burns' sensitive rapport with disparate individuals—the young and the old, male and female, the long-established and the newly arrived—with whom Burns easily enters into conversation.

The predominantly rural, agricultural occupations of Guatemalans in Indiantown are replaced in Norita Vlach's volume by the challenges of making ends meet while living in exile in the urban Bay Area of San Francisco. Vlach, who teaches social work at San José State University and is herself of Guatemalan lineage, states that her book

has two objectives: (1) examination of motives for migration to the United States of Guatemalan families with teenagers and (2) exploration of the processes of psychological change and adaptation that take place within these families during the early period of resettlement (p. xv).

In the first chapter, Vlach presents a theoretical overview of migration literature, distinguishing between approaches categorized as "historical-structural" and "acculturational/phenomenological" in nature. The second chapter, ninety pages in length and the core of the book, examines the case specifics of six different families, documenting Guatemalan migration to the United States with an eclectic, almost dizzying array of research strategies. Vlach sifts through the elaborate details of her fieldwork to furnish, in the final chapter, a conclusion which concisely integrates the general with the particular, and the theoretical with the empirical.

Vlach's talents are displayed at their best in Chapter Two. Here she combines the technical skills of a tireless social scientist with the empathy of an ethnographer who refuses to be detached from the tragic lot of the indi-

viduals being studied. With artistic economy and warm humanity, Vlach pares down the sad, painful stories of her subjects to capture, in a handful of words, what their disrupted lives existentially represent: conflict, adventure and death; success and sacrifice; control and freedom; assimilation and loss of identity; family duty, patriotism and obligation; solidarity, discipline and progress. Her text lends itself to several interpretive modes: it could be read just as easily in terms Oscar Lewis (1961) would label "culture of poverty," or in terms Nancy Farriss (1984) would consider "the collective enterprise of survival." And Vlach is just as disposed to derive meaning from one of her informant's dreams as to measure family characteristics by resorting to tests and questionnaires.

Burns and Vlach have added a crucial North American dimension to our understanding of the Guatemalan refugee situation. Along with Beatriz Manz (1988) and the late Myrna Mack (AVANCSO 1992), their work documents a Central American diaspora now so geographically diffuse as to register on the landscape here in Canada, thousands of miles from their original home (Wright 1993). The Guatemalans who live among us continue to do so not simply for reasons of economic opportunity but because of legitimate concerns for the safety of themselves and their families, should they ever return home. ■

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