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**Review of *Guest Workers and Resistance to U.S. Corporate Despotism*. Immanuel Ness. Reviewed by Barbara Franz.**

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Immanuel Ness, *Guest Workers and Resistance to U.S. Corporate Despotism*, University of Illinois Press (2011). \$70.00 (hardcover), \$25.00 (paperback).

In this important book, Immanuel Ness, professor of political science at Brooklyn College, links the topics of guest workers and international migration with labor organization. Ness argues that U.S. businesses actively promote the impression of labor shortages to undermine local employees and replace them with cheaper foreign temporary workers. Drawing on the experience of guest workers in low-pay hospitality and high-pay information technology industries, Ness states that guest workers are becoming the substitute for native, immigrant, and undocumented workers, because guest workers depend on one employer, have very few rights, and return to their countries of origin after completing their jobs. Guest labor thus is part of a larger capitalist strategy to undermine wages and working conditions. In Ness's critical view, it is "capital's search for profit that directs government efforts to expand guest worker programs that will diminish wages" in the U.S. (p. 19).

The book's contribution to the field of immigration literature is twofold. First, it shows how the increasing number of temporary workers in the U.S. over the last two decades has caused job loss for local native workers, a marked wage decline in entire industries (such as construction), and the destabilization of labor organizations. The book also links temporary labor migration to the U.S. (the host society) to Jamaica and India (the sending countries), indicating how temporary migrants bring relatively minor advantages (mostly in terms of child education) to their homelands. By dismissing India enthusiasts who boast of the largest innovative, capitalist middle class-based democracy in Asia, Ness insists that more than nine hundred million Indians live on less than \$2 per day. More people subsist in poverty in India than in sub-Saharan Africa (pp. 82-83). Unfortunately, little poverty elevation results from temporary work abroad.

Ness draws on ethnographic field research in India, Jamaica, and the United States, as well as government data and secondary sources to underpin his claims. He emphasizes, in Chapter 1, the calculated effort by business leaders to

influence Washington to increase the number of temporary seasonal migrant workers permitted to enter the country. The following chapter, "Political Economy of Migrant Labor," shows that business lobbyists have traditionally argued that an increase in the number of guest workers is necessary because American laborers either do not possess the necessary skills or are unwilling to work in low-prestige positions. Ness suggests that education can address the deficiency in sectors such as information technology, and wage increases will draw native workers to jobs in less-esteemed industries such as hospitality. In subsequent chapters, Ness traces the consequences of neoliberal reforms in India by focusing on the city of Hyderabad, where there are clashes between modern metropolitans and growing numbers of poor; examines how guest worker programs contribute to the displacement of American workers and emphasizes the abuse and mistreatment that guest workers frequently experience at the hands of their employers and coworkers; and investigates the effects of low-wage emigration from Jamaica. The final chapter explores the importance of new forms of transnational labor solidarity. Here Ness acknowledges that organized labor is in disarray in the United States.

The book convincingly argues that guest worker programs, part of the dramatic transformation of the working class, perpetuate the shift in the global division of labor by reducing the number of workers necessary to perform tasks and increasing reliance on low-skilled labor. However, Ness fails to realize that the state and labor face even larger problems. While outsourcing, off-shoring, and technological advances often erode union jobs, guest worker programs actually invite people to work in a foreign country. The human element cannot be underestimated, and the book suffers from a paucity of personal stories, which would have enlivened the narrative and strengthened the central points. The book would also benefit from comparison with Germany, where guest workers have been members of unions for many decades. The German case also demonstrates that not all guest worker programs lead to the attrition of decent-wage unionized jobs.

Ness's decision to refrain from hard, cold statistics makes his assessment of capital (often supported by organizations like the WTO) less convincing. For example, his case study

of high-tech workers in Hyderabad could be an extraordinary example of the global division of labor. Yet, insufficient data support the argument. Ness mentions that industries such as trucking have begun to recruit truck drivers from India. For example, a local Indian newspaper reported that 79 truck drivers have been cleared to obtain a Commercial Driving License in the U.S. (p. 72). This curious example illustrates the difficulty of providing statistical data for broader claims about corporations in the global market. Furthermore, the book lacks data concerning American businesses' schemes for more extensive guest worker programs.

Despite these caveats, this is an interesting and important work that sheds light on the challenges facing both organized and unorganized American workers if capital is allowed free range to expand guest worker programs. In brief, nobody but large business benefits from non-immigrant temporary workers flooding the labor market. The book calls for further study of the problem of the exploitation of unskilled labor in the developing and the developed world.

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Meika Loe, *Aging Our Way: Lessons Learned for Living from 85 and Beyond* (2011). Oxford University Press, \$29.95 (paperback).

Living to age 85, to become what is commonly known as "the oldest-old," is thought of in a number of different ways: as exciting, daunting, or as something to be completely avoided. However, aging is a natural part of the life cycle that can't be ignored. The 85+ population is the fastest growing age group nationally, but is typically undervalued and ignored.

*Aging Our Way: Lessons Learned for Living from 85 and Beyond* provides an in-depth look into the lives of thirty older adults living, mostly by themselves, in the community. It is based on three years of interviews by Loe and is connected to current literature throughout. The references and data provided include some of the most highly regarded sources and provide a wealth of information. Written in an engaging style, Loe sheds light on the realities about the well-being of those who are 85+ and illustrates resilience, creativity, adaptation and strength among a group of people often thought of as otherwise. I have