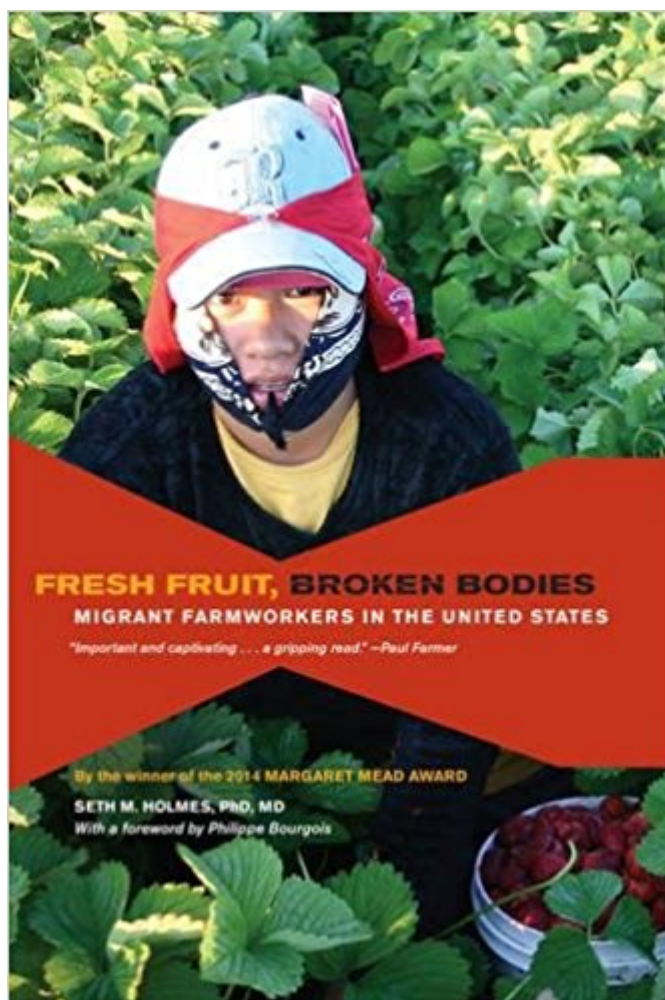


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# Fresh Fruit, Broken Bodies: Migrant Farmworkers In The United States (California Series In Public Anthropology)



## Synopsis

Fresh Fruit, Broken Bodies provides an intimate examination of the everyday lives and suffering of Mexican migrants in our contemporary food system. An anthropologist and MD in the mold of Paul Farmer and Didier Fassin, Holmes shows how market forces, anti-immigrant sentiment, and racism undermine health and health care. Holmes's material is visceral and powerful. He trekked with his companions illegally through the desert into Arizona and was jailed with them before they were deported. He lived with indigenous families in the mountains of Oaxaca and in farm labor camps in the U.S., planted and harvested corn, picked strawberries, and accompanied sick workers to clinics and hospitals. This "embodied anthropology" deepens our theoretical understanding of the ways in which social inequalities and suffering come to be perceived as normal and natural in society and in health care. All of the book award money and royalties from the sales of this book have been donated to farm worker unions, farm worker organizations and farm worker projects in consultation with farm workers who appear in the book.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

"By giving voice to silenced Mexican migrant laborers, Dr. Holmes exposes the links among suffering, the inequalities related to the structural violence of global trade which compel migration, and the symbolic violence of stereotypes and prejudices that normalize racism." (Marilyn Gates New York Journal of Books 2013-06-19)"The reader is left with a deep understanding of how injustice in

the United States is produced and the strength of the individuals that persevere through it." (Laura-Anne Minkoff-Zern Antipode 2013-07-01)"Holmes brings an unusual expertise to his writing about migrant Mexican farmworkers. . . . ã ã [He] goes far beyond mere observation." (Charles Ealy Austin American Statesman 2013-09-21)"The insights gleaned by [Holmes's] participation-observation are priceless." (Michelle A. Gonzalez National Catholic Reporter 2013-09-01)"Fresh Fruit, Broken Bodies is an absolute must-read for anyone interested in food and the food system. . . . ã ã To say that the book provides a vivid look at farm labor is an understatement." (Peter Benson Somatosphere 2013-10-16)"A compelling and frightening account of the lives of [Mexican migrant] workers. . . . [Holmes's] tales of crossing the border, doing backbreaking work in the fields, and exploring relationships with these dislocated and largely invisible workers is well worth a read." (Leah Douglas Serious Eats 2013-10-02)"A provocative, important new book. . . . Part heart-pounding adventure tale, part deep ethnographic study, part urgent plea for reform. . . . Holmesã ã brings an enlightening complexity to the issue of migrant workers." (Mark B. San Francisco Bay Guardian 2013-12-10)"A provocative, important new book. . . . Part heart-pounding adventure tale, part deep ethnographic study, part urgent plea for reform." (Marke B. Bay Guardian 2013-12-17)"A timely, eloquent, and analytically rigorous examination . . . an excellent resource." (MDICLHUMANITIES Centre for Medical Humanities 2015-12-09)"Holmes guides the reader through this endeavor by providing an intense blend of informant life histories, their clinical case studies, observations of and conversations with additional social actors on the farms and in the clinics he visited. . . . A timely and innovative text blending theory and praxis." (Alegra Laboratory 2016-03-15)

"In Fresh Fruit, Broken Bodies, Seth Holmes offers up an important and captivating new ethnography, linking the structural violence inherent in the migrant labor system in the United States to the social processes by which it becomes normalized. Drawing on five years of fieldwork among the Triqui people from Oaxaca, Mexico, Holmes investigates local understandings of suffering and illness, casting into relief stereotypes and prejudices that he ties to the transnational labor that puts cheap food on American tables. Throughout this compelling volume, Holmes considers ways of engaging migrant farm workers and allies that might help disrupt exploitation that reaches across national boundaries and can too often be hidden away. This book is a gripping read not only for cultural and medical anthropologists, immigration and ethnic studies students, students of labor and agriculture, physicians and public health professionals, but also anyone interested in the lives and well-being of the people providing them cheap, fresh fruit."&#151;Paul Farmer, Co-founder of

Partners In Health and Chair of the Department of Global Health and Social Medicine at Harvard Medical School. "Dramatically portrays the harsh physical and emotional conditions under which farm workers labor. As they complete their brutal work, they suffer long-term disabilities in their senior years. This can be avoided with reasonable and decent working conditions. Let us remember them as we eat our daily meals."—Dolores Huerta "This book takes concepts from the world of scholarship to enrich the understanding of people's lives; and the vivid detail, and empathetic portrait of the reality of people's lives enrich scholarship. The book leaves the reader in no doubt that economic arrangements, social hierarchies, discrimination, poor living and working conditions have profound effects on the health of marginalized people. It is all done with the touch of a gifted writer. The reader lives the detail and is much moved."—Professor Sir Michael Marmot, Director, UCL Institute of Health Equity "Provides a unique understanding of the political economy of migrant labor and of its human cost."—Didier Fassin is Professor of Social Science at the Institute for Advanced Study, Princeton, and the author of *Humanitarian Reason*. "Here in the U.S., we both utterly rely on immigrants from the South to feed us, and erect walls and employ militias to keep them out. In this groundbreaking new book, Holmes goes underground to explore what this bizarre duality means for the people who live it. A brilliant combination of academic rigor and journalistic daring."—Tom Philpott, Food and Agriculture Correspondent, *Mother Jones Magazine* "Fresh Fruit, Broken Bodies is a powerful exposé of the social and political realities that mark the bodies and limit the life prospects of Mexican migrant farmworkers in the world's richest economy. An absorbing read and a resolute call for just labor relations and health equity as key to a common and sustainable human development."—João Biehl, author of *Vita: Life in a Zone of Social Abandonment* "Holmes' book is a lyrical ethnographic rendition of Robert Chailloux's "Still Life with Strawberries," revealing the back stage, back-breaking work of indigenous Mexican pickers trapped in patron-client relationship to Japanese-American farm owners who are themselves trapped in price wars with global competitors to produce the beautiful abundance that we take for granted."—Nancy Scheper-Hughes, author of *Death without Weeping* "A tour du force ethnography. Holmes gives us the rare combination of medical, anthropological, and humanitarian gazes into the lives of Oaxacan migrant farmworkers in the United States. Their agricultural field work and his anthropological fieldwork intersect to produce a book full of insights into the pathos, inequalities, frustrations, and dreams punctuating the farmworkers' daily lives. Through Holmes' vivid prose, and the words of the workers themselves, we feel with the workers as they strain their bodies picking fruit and pruning vines, we sense their fear as they cross the U.S.-Mexico border, we understand their frustrations as

they are chased and detained by immigration authorities, and cheer at their perseverance when faced with bureaucrats and medical personnel who treat them as if they are to blame for their own impoverished condition. A must read for anyone interested in the often invisible lives and suffering of those whose labor provides for our very sustenance. —Leo R. Chavez, Professor of Anthropology, University of California, Irvine

In his first book, anthropologist and doctor Seth M. Holmes gives us an intimate look into the lives of migrant farmworkers. Through his exhaustive research, Holmes reveals the struggles of the millions who work in our fields, every year, to put food on our tables. In deliberations about immigration and farm policy, these are the stories that should be at the center. Holmes' helps us put them there. —Anna Lappé, author *Diet for a Hot Planet* and founder, Real Food Media Project

Like the reporting of Edward R. Murrow and the labors of Cesar Chavez, Seth Holmes' work on these modern-day migrants reminds us of the human beings who produce the greatest bounty of food the world has ever seen. They take jobs other American workers won't take for pay other American workers won't accept and under conditions other American workers won't tolerate. Yet except for the minority of farm workers protected by United Farm Workers' contracts, these workers too often don't earn enough to adequately feed themselves. Seth Holmes' writing fuels the UFW's ongoing organizing among farm workers and admonishes the American people that our work remains unfinished. —Arturo S. Rodriguez, President, United Farm Workers of America

Holmes' moving work reveals the "bad faith" American consumerism that criminalizes migrant laborers even as it depends on them for access to the dinner table. While his theoretical framework is at times awkward, his analysis of the social plight of his Triqui companions more than compensates for this deficiency. The larger issues of neoliberal market inequalities may at times seem a little daunting for non-academic readers, but Holmes' narrative consistently demonstrates that our demand for cheap products has devastating global consequences. Definitely worth a close read.

I bought this book for my anthropology class and I really enjoyed it. I really changed my outlook on how people are treated on farms and the cost of where our fruits and vegetables come from. I recommend this for anybody to read.

I loved this book. I had to read it for a class and I wholly agree with that other reader who pointed

out the importance of this book. Holmes does an amazing job of pointing out the systemic discrimination and dehumanization of migrant workers and pulling it out of a purely political context. If you don't know anything or if you think you know a lot, this work is indispensable. The anthropological perspective creates a wonderfully holistic and important ethnography. That being said, this is an anthropological work. There are references and there is jargon because this is academic writing. It is very well written and an easy read, but if you are not familiar with some of the jargon then I recommend looking it up when you come across it. Aside from that, it is easy to follow and engaging. Holmes does a great job of pulling together theory and anecdotes, not just from the Triqui workers, but from the bosses, doctors, and other workers in different positions in the fields. This is all together a must read.

I was doing some research/reading on the topic of migrant farm workers and came across this book. This professor lived as a migrant worker (even making a dangerous illegal crossing from Mexico to the U.S.) to study this population's world. In short, I don't now walk through a grocery store's produce department in the same way -- not thinking about the men, women, and kids who picked those items for pennies. The book stays readable for the most part; it's only when Holmes dips into academic language that my eyes glazed over (and I skipped ahead). His recounting his time in the fields, as well as traveling and living with a usually invisible population, was fascinating. Well worth reading.

After reading *Fresh Fruit, Broken Bodies* you will be hard-pressed to shop for fruits and vegetables at your grocery store without thinking about those who helped bring the produce out of the fields. Their stories help to unfold and expose the rhetoric we hear about preventing undocumented workers from entering the U.S. These are people with families and responsibilities trying to earn a living as best they can. Dr. Holmes' efforts to tell us about them and the work they do is a national service to be commended. Bravo!

Excellent read from start to finish. The author uses ethnography to tell the story of Triqui Mexican migrants in an immensely illuminating fashion. He expands our perceptions by analysing the domestic and international social, economic and political structure in which migration exists. He also utilizes critical theories to explain the normalization of migrant suffering and how that suffering is illegitimate, along with its naturalization. I'd recommend this book to anyone interested in social justice and is looking for articulate language to illustrate clear ideas around some of the problems

precluding and solutions for bringing about social justice and general equity.

This book tells a story that needs to be told, of the people who tend and harvest the food that sustains us, that sustains society who are driven out of their homeland by the hidden hand of an exploitive economic system and then marginalized and criminalized -- the better to exploit you with. The author tells this story as someone who walked in the shoes of his protagonists. And more, he writes with a scientific spirit of uncovering not only the clear injustice of the condition of migrant farmworkers, but the different social groupings they interact with and how each views their roles in this structure. He pays particular attention to health issues and reveals important insights on how social services are delivered to those this social order views as worthy only so long as they produce wealth for others.

Eye opening

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