

NATION OF NEWCOMERS
Immigrant History as American History

General Editors: Matthew Jacobson and Werner Sollors

*Beyond the Shadow of Camptown:
Korean Military Brides in America*
Ji-Yeon Yuh

*Feeling Italian:
The Art of Ethnicity in America*
Thomas J. Ferraro

*Constructing Black Selves:
Caribbean American Narratives and
the Second Generation*
Lisa D. McGill

*Transnational Adoption:
A Cultural Economy of Race,
Gender, and Kinship*
Sara K. Dorow

*Immigration and American
Popular Culture: An Introduction*
Jeffrey Melnick and Rachel Rubin

*From Arrival to Incorporation:
Migrants to the U.S. in a Global Era*
Edited by Elliott R. Barkan,
Hasia Diner, and Alan M. Kraut

*Migrant Imaginaries: Latino Cultural
Politics in the U.S.-Mexico Borderlands*
Alicia Schmidt Camacho

*The Force of Domesticity:
Filipina Migrants and Globalization*
Rhacel Salazar Parreñas

*Immigrant Rights in
the Shadows of Citizenship*
Edited by Rachel Ida Buff

*Rough Writing: Ethnic Authorship in
Theodore Roosevelt's America*
Aviva F. Taubenfeld

*The Third Asiatic Invasion:
Empire and Migration in
Filipino America, 1898-1946*
Rick Baldoz

*Race for Citizenship:
Black Orientalism and Asian Uplift from
Pre-Emancipation to Neoliberal America*
Helen Heran Jun

*Entitled to Nothing:
The Struggle for Immigrant Health
Care in the Age of Welfare Reform*
Lisa Sun-Hee Park

*The Slums of Aspen:
Immigrants vs. the Environment
in America's Eden*
Lisa Sun-Hee Park and
David Naguib Pellow

LISA SUN-HEE PARK AND
DAVID NAGUIB PELLOW

The Slums of Aspen

Immigrants vs.
the Environment in
America's Eden



NEW YORK UNIVERSITY PRESS
New York and London

Introduction

Environmental Privilege in the Rocky Mountains

On December 13, 1999, the City Council of Aspen, Colorado—one of the country's most exclusive recreational sites for some of the world's wealthiest people—unanimously passed a resolution petitioning the U.S. Congress and the president to restrict the number of immigrants entering the United States. The language of the resolution suggests that this goal could be achieved by enforcing laws regulating undocumented immigration and reducing authorized immigration to 175,000 persons per year, down from the current annual level of between 700,000 and one million.¹ One of their primary reasons for encouraging tougher immigration laws was the purported negative impact of immigrants on the nation's ecosystems.

Concerns about immigration's environmental impacts generally include such broad issues as urban/suburban sprawl, the loss of urban green space, and overdevelopment of wilderness and agricultural lands. In Aspen, more specific complaints include everything from car exhaust pollution associated with older model vehicles many immigrants drive (since workers drive anywhere from thirty to one hundred miles to labor in Aspen's tourist industry), littering in mountain caves where some homeless immigrant workers sleep since affordable housing is nonexistent (the average sale price of a single family home in Aspen in 2000 was \$3.8 million²), to having too many babies (i.e., overpopulation), which some fear will contaminate the pristine culture that accompanies the stunning ecology of the Rocky Mountains. With an unemployment rate of 1.5 percent (in

2000), Aspen experienced severe labor shortages, and Latinos and other immigrants filled the many low-paying, seasonal jobs within the service industry. And, while there are a wide number of nationalities represented in the immigrant service economy of the Roaring Fork Valley, we focus on Latinos who comprise the majority of immigrants in the area.

The narratives that define immigration (particularly from Latin America) as a leading ecological threat also expose a profound irony: the everyday reality of this playground for the rich depends enormously upon low-wage immigrant labor. The luxury goods and services that distinguish Aspen, that make it a "world-class" resort town, are possible in large part because of the workers from all over the world who clean the goods and deliver the services and care for the people who buy them. In some respects, this is a bizarre story of a town that prides itself on being environmentally conscious, whose city council can approve the construction of yet another 10,000-square-foot vacation home with a heated outdoor driveway, and simultaneously decry as an eyesore the "ugly" trailer homes where low-income immigrants live. In other respects, this is a familiar story of America's continuing clash between people of different races and classes, who rely on each other and yet cannot figure out how to live with each other. In still other respects, this is a story of the future, about the increasingly brutal inequality that will only become more pronounced as we negotiate the fast-paced global economy and its flows of money, ideas, and people.³

From 2000 to 2004, we traveled up and down Aspen's social pecking order. We conducted extensive archival and interview-based research to understand how people experience these contentious social issues. Our goal was to better understand the growing economic and racial inequalities from new vantage points, specifically from the perspective of environmentalists and immigrants. Our mission is to shed new light on these controversies, and to raise what we hope will be innovative, constructive questions that point to productive solutions.

Scholars and activists have, for four decades, presented evidence that people of color, as well as poor, working class, and indigenous communities face greater threats from pollution and industrial hazards than other groups. Environmental threats include municipal and hazardous waste incinerators, garbage dumps, coal-fired power plants, polluting manufacturing facilities, toxic schools, occupationally hazardous workplaces,

substandard housing, uneven impacts of climate change, and the absence of healthy food sources. Marginalized communities tend to confront a disproportionate volume of these threats, what researchers and advocates have labeled *environmental injustice* and *environmental racism*.⁴ These communities are also more likely to be impacted by extractive industrial operations such as mining, large dams, and timber harvesting, as well as "natural" disasters like flooding, earthquakes, and hurricanes.⁵ We observe these patterns at the local, regional, national, and global scale, and the damage to public health, cultures, economies, and ecosystems from such activities is well documented.⁶ For example, immigrants and people of color in California's Silicon Valley live in communities with disproportionately high concentrations of toxic superfund sites and water contamination, and work in jobs that expose them to disproportionately high volumes of hazardous chemicals.⁷ In Chicago, African Americans and Latinos live in neighborhoods with disproportionately high numbers of garbage dumps and other environmental hazards,⁸ and we see this pattern holding true for Asian Americans, Native Americans, and working-class whites nationally.⁹ The field of environmental justice studies has emerged as a means to consider the historical and contemporary drivers of environmental inequalities, its many manifestations, and as a vehicle to address this problem through research, action, and policy. Environmental justice studies span the fields of history, sociology, anthropology, law, communication, economics, literature, ethnic studies, public health, architecture, medicine, and many others. Activists and policymakers have also produced a great deal of research on environmental justice issues and have drawn on the work of scholars to pass laws and introduce state and corporate policies, which would confront some of the most glaring aspects of environmental injustice in the United States and globally.

Scholars have also demonstrated how communities have responded to such ecological violence creatively through protest, art, science, and sustainable development projects. Such work underscores how environmental injustices shape the politics of race, class, indigeneity, citizenship, gender, sexuality, and culture.¹⁰ While these studies reveal the hardships and suffering associated with environmental inequality and environmental racism, fewer studies consider the flipside, or source, of that reality: *environmental privilege*. Over the last several years we have been developing this concept, inspired by the work of scholars like William Freudenburg, Kenneth Gould,

George Lipsitz, and Laura Pulido.¹¹ We argue that environmental privilege results from the exercise of economic, political, and cultural power that some groups enjoy, which enables them exclusive access to coveted environmental amenities such as forests, parks, mountains, rivers, coastal property, open lands, and elite neighborhoods. Environmental privilege is embodied in the fact that some groups can access spaces and resources, which are protected from the kinds of ecological harm that other groups are forced to contend with everyday. These advantages include organic and pesticide-free foods, neighborhoods with healthier air quality, and energy and other products siphoned from the living environments of other peoples. In our study, we show how environmental privileges accrue to the few while environmental burdens confront the many, including lack of access to clean air, land, water, and open spaces.

If environmental racism and injustice are abundant and we can readily observe them around the world, then surely the same can be said for environmental privilege. We cannot have one without the other; they are two sides of the same coin. The authors of the groundbreaking United Nations Millennium Ecosystem Assessment articulate the relationship between environmental injustice and environmental privilege quite powerfully:

In numerous cases, it is the poor who suffer from the loss of environmental services due to the pressure exerted on natural systems for the benefit of other communities, often in other parts of the world. . . . The impact of climate change will be felt above all in the poorest parts of the world—for example, as it exacerbates drought and reduces agricultural production of the driest regions—while greenhouse gas emissions essentially come from rich populations.¹²

Where there is pesticide poisoning of agricultural workers and ecosystems as a result of multinational chemical companies producing and forcing these toxins onto laborers and global South communities (via aid packages from international financial institutions), somewhere those who profit from these actions may be living and working in pesticide-free spaces, eating organic foods (the term “global South” is a mainly a social—rather than strictly geographic—designation meant to encompass politically and economically vulnerable communities). While some people are forced to live next door to a paint factory, a landfill, or an

incinerator and breathe air that contributes to asthma and various respiratory diseases, others have the luxury of spending time in second homes in secluded semirural environs and can marvel at the fresh air they take in during a morning walk. Deforestation in the Amazon and Indonesia produces wood and paper products for people in far away places who live in far more comfortable surroundings, while the indigenous peoples whose land produces such goods confront genocide. Environmental privilege not only feeds off of environmental injustice, it *is* environmental injustice. The French journalist Hervé Kempf puts it this way: “We must . . . understand that the ecological crisis and the social crisis are two faces of the same disaster. And this disaster is implemented by a system of power that has no other objective than to maintain the privileges of the ruling classes.”¹³

Environmental privilege exists whenever environmental injustice occurs. In Minnesota, residents receive much of their heating and cooling from the Xcel Energy Corporation and Manitoba Hydro, both of which supply that energy from hydroelectric dams built on the lands of the Métis and Cree First Nations in Canada. As their hunting grounds and sources of fishing were disrupted in the wake of dam construction and flooding, these indigenous communities have faced economic, social, psychological, cultural, and ecological devastation. Dawn Mikkelsen’s film *Green Green Water* explores this story in depth and urges Minnesota residents who enjoy the benefits of hydro-powered electricity to reflect upon the price that Canadian indigenous nations pay for their southern neighbors’ creature comforts. Environmental privileges like this are difficult to witness, but they are rarely questioned because of the social distance between those who receive them and those who suffer the consequences. In fact, few Minnesotans have any idea where their energy comes from.

The international trade in hazardous waste reveals environmental privilege and racism on a global scale. As the volume of industrial chemical pollutants expanded during the post–World War II economic boom in the global North, environmental movements in Europe and the United States pushed for greater regulation of these materials through legislative mechanisms like the Clean Air and Clean Water Act, and the founding of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. In response, rather than fundamentally changing the way they functioned, many transnational firms instead shifted their dirtiest operations and most hazardous products to lands

and markets in the global South. Other firms simply began dumping their chemical wastes in these communities. For example, as activists and industries in the United States and Europe came to realize how intensely toxic electronic wastes like old computers are, these parts have been shipped overseas to Ghana, Nigeria, India, Pakistan, China, Brazil, and the Philippines, where they are used for manufacturing new products under highly hazardous conditions, or just dumped: meadows, farmland, market places, neighborhoods, and bodies of water in these nations are now filled with the polluting carcasses of electronic garbage from rich communities, presenting significant threats to public health and ecosystems. Many observers have called this practice "toxic colonialism" or global environmental racism. While we agree with this characterization, it only focuses on one end of the process. The problem began in the global North, where the flipside of environmental racism—environmental privilege—drives this practice from within some of the wealthiest and most elite communities on earth.

Environmental privilege is readily observable in many contexts nationally and globally. Therefore, what we witnessed in Aspen is not unique to that particular city. The discourse, cultural politics, and policymaking in Aspen and the surrounding Roaring Fork Valley are familiar to those that can be found in various historical moments and across geographic spaces.

While racially and economically marginalized people living in poor rural towns, inner cities, inner ring suburbs, and on reservations do battle with polluting industries and intransigent governments, those living in wealthy enclaves enjoy relatively cleaner air, land, and water—and as important, often believe they have *earned the right* to these privileges. Aspen, Colorado, and many other places in the United States are classic examples of environmental privilege and deserve closer consideration as sites for understanding the roots of environmental justice struggles. The case of Aspen illustrates the importance of understanding poverty and environmental inequality by getting out of the ghetto and into places where racial and economic privilege are enjoyed. That certain communities face greater environmental harm is indeed a social problem, but the accompanying social problem is that others benefit from this harm through environmental privilege. We must examine the other side of environmental degradation and understand the communities that have come to expect a pristine world (and the army of workers who make such a world possible), in order to expose the source and persistence of environmental injustice.

Aspen and the Roaring Fork Valley is just one of the planet's many sites built as a refuge from undesirable people and as a place where nature can be manipulated for the convenience and enjoyment of a handful of elites. Aspen is environmental privilege at work.¹⁴

Saving the Environment, Aspen Style

Terry Paulson, an Aspen City Council member and also a longtime immigration critic and self-avowed environmentalist, hailed the 1999 resolution as an important milestone for Aspen. He received support and guidance from nationally prominent nativist organizations, which seek to control immigration in various ways, using public protest and legislation. These organizations include the Carrying Capacity Network and the Center for Immigration Studies, whose staff reportedly told Paulson "other communities haven't had the courage to do so. . . . Because many current immigrants are members of minority groups in the U.S., attempts to limit immigration may be seen as racist."¹⁵ Paulson wasted no time in calling for an expansion of the resolution beyond the city of Aspen. He announced his intention to launch a statewide campaign to "promote overpopulation awareness" and declared, "If we address population and do something about it, everything else will fall in line."¹⁶

Aspen, located in Pitkin County, Colorado, successfully persuaded the county to follow the city's lead, and in March 2000, the county commissioners voiced unanimous approval for a "population stabilization" resolution. The commissioners were largely inspired by a presentation Mr. Paulson gave, in which he screened *Immigration by the Numbers*, a film produced by the influential nativist organization NumbersUSA.¹⁷ The Aspen City Council document "A resolution of the city of Aspen, Colorado, supporting population stabilization in the United States" cleverly combines classic nativist language around immigration with ideas that most politically progressive persons could embrace. The resolution includes the following statements regarding environmental and labor conditions in the United States:

The population of the U.S. is six percent of the world's population, consuming up to 25 percent of the world's natural resources.

[The U.S. government should begin] requiring equitable wages and benefits for workers and community environmental protections to be part of all free trade agreements.

[T]he people of the United States and the City of Aspen, Colorado envision a country with . . . material and energy efficiency, a sustainable future, a healthy environment, clean air and water, ample open space, wilderness, abundant wildlife and social and civic cohesion in which the dignity of human life is enhanced and protected.

The council wanted Aspen to be a "city beautiful," a beacon of sustainability and social responsibility, where the activities of the U.S. government and corporations would have positive impacts both locally and globally. But how do we get there? This is where nativism enters the picture:

Population growth generated by mass immigration to the United States causes increasing pressures on our environment and forces local governments and communities to spend taxpayers' dollars for additional schools, health care facilities, water disposal plants, transportation systems, fire protection, water supplies, power generation plants and many other social and environmental costs.

Following this logic, immigration becomes the major cause of our ecological crises. The resolution goes on to state: "The ability of the United States to support a population within its carrying capacity is now strained because of population growth."⁸

At the end of the resolution the city council called on the federal government to "immediately stabilize the population of the United States . . . by mandated enforcement of our immigration laws against illegal immigration, thereby promoting the future well being of all the citizens of this Nation and the City of Aspen."⁹ The cultural and racial overtones are clear, as the resolution references Europe as the model for sustainability. Specifically, the text states that the United States has "the highest population growth rate of the developed countries of the world. Most European countries are at zero or negative population growth."¹⁰ Interestingly, many European nations and Japan now consider their low birthrates a social problem given the diminishing domestic labor pool and subsequent increased dependence on immigrants. Terry Paulson sponsored the resolution with the following opening statement:

Fellow Council Members. This resolution we will be considering for adoption tonight could be the most important consideration we will ever make as representatives of our constituents and their children. In October, I attended and participated in a conference at the Aspen Institute, called The Myth of Sustainable Growth. At that conference, I had the privilege of hearing a remarkable talk, "Population, Immigration and Global Ethics," by Jonette Christian, from Mainers for Immigration Reform. Jonette is a family therapist by profession, giving her a very special perspective on this matter before us. Here is some of what she said: "We have agitated, confused and deluded ourselves with the illusion that we are being overwhelmed by many, many problems—when in fact we have primarily only one. But it is the one that terrifies us the most, and we handle that terror by chattering endlessly about everything else. Denying . . . [ignoring] and minimizing population growth in the 1990s is a *hate crime against future generations*, and it must end." Please, join me . . . by passing this resolution as written, and thereby insuring a sustainable future for America and her children.²¹

Similar initiatives have been proposed in numerous states and cities across the West and Southwest. There are a number of common threads that are evident in these campaigns. First, the primacy of native-born or white children is invoked as part of a larger moral imperative, and population or immigration control is portrayed as a difficult but necessary mission to be carried out by a few brave souls. Second, immigrants are cast as the main source of our social and ecological ills, and doing nothing to stem the tide of immigration is characterized as a "hate crime" against future generations of Americans—again, the implication is that "Americans" comprise those identified as native-born and white. In this way, discriminatory anti-immigrant actions are not just recast as a patriotic duty; white Americans who oppose these measures are portrayed as perpetrating violence against their own race.

What is interesting here is that these are privileged communities claiming victim status. A Roaring Fork Valley area progressive activist and educator told us: "Environmental racism is when people of color are dumped on. But here, especially in Aspen, we have rich white folks who are saying *we're* getting dumped on! So it's like the idea has been totally turned around and upside down." In other words, Aspenites are essentially crying

"reverse environmental racism" because they view immigrants not only as a cause of environmental harm, but as a kind of social contamination, a form of pollution harming whites.²²

Shortly thereafter, the city of Aspen experienced a momentary embarrassment when it was reported that its resolution was featured on the website of the American Patrol—a nativist organization whose founder, Glenn Spencer, is a nationally known ultraconservative activist who lobbied vigorously for the passage of California's Proposition 187 (denying public benefits to undocumented immigrants) and who wrote an infamous letter to the *Los Angeles Times* in 1996 stating that "Chicanos and Mexicanos lie as a means of survival."²³ The American Patrol website also contained a radio production titled "The Mexican Conquest of California," claiming a conspiracy between Mexican Americans and the Mexican government to retake the U.S. Southwest and rename it "Aztlán."²⁴ In response to this and other reports of concern about the resolution, the Aspen City Council took great pains to stress that the initiative "was not racially motivated."²⁵

Four months later, the Pitkin County commissioners passed a nearly identical resolution. However, a number of additional statements stand out and reveal the tensions and affinities between nativism on one hand, and cynical notions of ecological sustainability and social responsibility on the other. The county resolution contained the following statements: "Immigration is the leading cause of population growth in the United States. Population is the leading cause of environmental degradation."²⁶ Thus, by implication, immigration must be the primary driver of ecological degradation. The resolution continues with the declaration that "Legal and illegal immigration combined is too high for assimilation."²⁷ This claim is followed by population statistics that paint a picture of an Anglo society overwhelmed by brown people from south of the border. The clear implication is a cultural fear that the Southwestern United States could be the target of a *reconquista* or a reconquering by Mexico. The resolution continues:

The Board of County Commissioners recognizes the value of diversity and the contributions of immigrants since the arrival of the first settlers many centuries ago. We also recognize and deplore the exploitation of immigrants through violations of the Fair Labor Standards Act, such as minimum wage and overtime. We specifically reject the notion that

immigrants (legal and not) are disproportionately criminal or bad people. Nonetheless, we believe immigration, both legal and illegal, should be restrained. The United States has a responsibility to promote family planning opportunities worldwide, to require our trade partners to treat their laborers humanely . . . to respect our shared environment . . . [and] provide financial support of programs designed to assist Third World nations with family planning utilizing all methods of education and contraceptives available. . . . Pitkin County accepts its responsibility to work to improve working and living conditions, both locally and throughout the world, through appropriate regulations that support multi-cultural education programs, that conserve natural resources worldwide, that move toward greater energy efficiency in production and use of goods and services, and that exhibit social responsibility.²⁸

Beneath Pitkin County's rhetoric lies a disturbing view of "social responsibility." The family-planning claims in particular are troubling considering the history of such efforts by U.S. government agencies and their links to sterilization campaigns among women of color in the United States and the global South.²⁹ But we believe that along with the rest of the text—and like the Aspen resolution—it underscores the long-standing link between nativism and environmentalism in the United States and elsewhere.

As Aspen councilmember Tom McCabe cautioned, "The planet's a finite resource. . . . We can't indefinitely welcome people and expect to maintain our quality of life."³⁰ And that is precisely the point: Aspenites and others in privileged places across the United States want to protect their "quality of life," which includes resources and wealth derived from the ecosystems that only they have access to and from the hard work of others. This is what makes environmental privilege work: the disconnection between the way of life in a place like Aspen, and the social and environmental relationships that make that lifestyle possible. It is no wonder that the U.S. environmental movement finds itself in a state of crisis, with many residents holding such organizations beneath contempt for elitist politics and righteous views of a world that they refuse to share with others.³¹

While we do not doubt that humans, including immigrants, contribute to strains on ecosystems, we find the intense focus on immigrants misplaced. This focus instead functions to benefit other actors and institutions who likely contribute a great deal more to environmental harm. We

should remember that European immigrants and internal European American migrants—along with the U.S. military, the federal government, and many extractive industries—produced inordinate damage to the American West long before contemporary battles began over preserving this fabled landscape. The story of the California Gold Rush and the later gold and silver rushes in the Rocky Mountains offer ample evidence.³² Urban theorist Mike Davis considers much of the intermountain West a “national sacrifice zone” as a result of U.S. military activities that have taken place in the region over the years; many scholars and scientists have ignored or underestimated this position. Uncovering this reality and challenging dominant images of the region, Davis considers the impacts of “militarism, urbanization, the Interstate highway, epidemic vandalism, mass tourism, and the extractive industries’ boom-and-bust cycles.”³³

Making Sense of Aspen

What is the meaning of this conflict in Aspen, Pitkin County, and the surrounding towns of Colorado’s Roaring Fork Valley, and why does it matter? We see the turmoil in the Roaring Fork Valley as part of the larger, and less recognized, problem at the intersection of immigration and environmental politics in the United States. We like to think that our environmental movement is as pristine and unblemished as Mother Earth. But the reality is far closer to the state of our planet today: sullied by our ignorance, corrupted by our ideologies, threatened by our own self-interests. Environmental and nativist movements share a great deal of common ground, far more than most progressives and liberals would like to believe.

Examples abound of the links between efforts to “save” the earth and efforts to control certain groups of people. The more we look, the more we see that both of these practices intersect with discomforting frequency. Environmental and nativist movements in the United States have been historically racist, classist, and patriarchal, and these efforts have been rooted in biological, natural, and social scientific ideas of how the world should be. Consider that the creation of many of this country’s national parks was made possible through the explicit removal or containment of Native American tribes.³⁴ The feminist scholar Betsy Hartmann calls this

“coercive conservation,” the violent expulsion of local people from what become wilderness preserves. The environmental group Conservation International (CI) is notorious for supporting such practices. Hartmann reports that CI works with the World Wildlife Fund and USAID (both groups are infamous for their focus on population control in the global South) and the Mexican government in Chiapas to remove people—often Zapatista communities of indigenous peoples—from “illegal” settlements to restore parts of the Lacandon Forest. This policy, paired with the Mexican government’s alleged forced sterilization of many women in the region, reinforces the simplistic contention of the region’s CI director, that deforestation is the direct result of population growth: “It’s obvious that the main problem is overpopulation.”³⁵

Thus, environmentalists and nativists have historically shared a preoccupation not only with population control but also with erecting and reinforcing borders to support conservation efforts. These preoccupations are some of the many reasons why mainstream environmentalism remains a largely culturally exclusive cause. The mainstream environmental movement has been incapable of building a mass following in this nation precisely because it refuses to embrace a broader agenda of social justice. In fact, the movement has more often supported policies that benefit and reflect the desires of privileged groups. The unfortunate ideological fixation on population control—one of the core aims of nativism—has crippled the environmental cause in this nation.

Drawing on the work of scholars studying immigration and race in the United States, we view nativism as part of a system of discourses and actions that seek to promote the interests of native-born peoples in opposition to other populations on the grounds of their foreignness.³⁶ “Foreignness” need not be strictly defined as non-native born, since people of color born in the United States have been defined throughout our history as foreign in cultural terms.³⁷ And while some forms of nativism may not be overtly racist, the justification for inclusion or exclusion of certain groups almost always comes down to race. Indeed, race cannot be separated from nativism because the meaning of legal and full social citizenship (i.e., belonging) in the United States has always been racialized.³⁸

Extending this concept to the realm of environmental politics, we use the term “nativist environmentalism,” which we define as a political movement that seeks racial exclusivity in places deemed to have special

ecological and racial or cultural significance. Nativist environmentalism is a form of racism rooted in a sense of entitlement to places imbued with particular socio-ecological importance. In other words, while traditional nativists defend "their" nation's borders because they believe they are the truly rightful inhabitants, nativist environmentalists do the same when it concerns the confluence of environmental and cultural entitlements. It is environmentalism with a racial or cultural inflection, and nativism with an ecological inflection. Nativist environmentalism is the ideological force at the nexus of the nativist and environmental movements, a politics that threatens to damage both our social fabric and our planet.

Nativist environmentalism is a phenomenon that supports not only racial exclusion but also environmental privilege—the notion that one group should have near-exclusive enjoyment of precious ecological resources such as open space, national parks, ocean—and lakefront real estate, clean air, clean land, and clean water.³⁹ Environmental privilege is a key ecological dimension of social inequality that has gone largely unnoticed by social scientists, as we have almost entirely focused on the problem of disadvantage in studies of environmental inequality and environmental racism. Communities of color and working-class communities are more likely than others to suffer from an overburden of industrial pollution from factories, landfills, chemical plants, and the like, and are more likely to bear the brunt of ecosystem resource extraction activities and the impact of "natural" disasters. But if we are to fully understand inequality, then we must examine both disadvantage and advantage, misery and luxury, and poverty and wealth. Within our current economic system, environmental privilege cannot exist without environmental injustice.

Nativist environmentalism and environmental privilege are further linked and reinforced by a common view of environmental politics and social change we call "the Aspen Logic." The Aspen Logic is a worldview that people across the mainstream political spectrum embrace, but one that is particularly prominent in liberal and Democratic political circles. The idea is that environmentalism and capitalism are entirely compatible and not in fundamental opposition. In fact, within the Aspen Logic, true capitalism is the kind of economic system that pays closer attention to nature's limits and needs while never sacrificing profits. By extension, the only path to ecological sustainability is by embracing a kinder, greener capitalism. The Aspen Logic suggests that we can achieve ecological goals without

confronting the brutality and violence that capitalism necessarily imposes on people and ecosystems. We can attain sustainability without challenging racism, class hierarchies, patriarchy, and nativism. The Aspen Logic is the defining philosophy of the mainstream environmental movement and, we believe, a primary reason why so few real advances toward improving the health of our planet have been made.

The Aspen Logic is hard at work in the en vogue fixation with the so-called green economy. The fundamental problem with an idea like green capitalism is that it presumes that capitalism is, at root, a just system that only needs regulation and reform. We reject this premise for what should be obvious reasons: because capitalism is a hierarchical, violent system of production, consumption, commerce, and governance that inherently views people and ecosystems as variables to be manipulated for the benefit of a minority. The same can be said of many socialist nations whose leaders have committed the same folly. Therefore green capitalism does not result in a transformed society marked by ecological sustainability and social justice because (1) it is not possible and (2) because that is not the goal. The goal of green capitalism is to maintain the current social order and perhaps appease and co-opt some of its liberal critics. Many progressive and liberal individuals would probably recoil at the idea of green racism. But that is exactly what nativist environmentalism is: a political ideology that seeks to subvert ecosystems to the needs of certain people while punishing others. Capitalism, whether green or mean, is no different. Environmental privilege can be challenged only when larger systems of power are undone.

We speak of nativist environmentalism to make clear that we are not referring to all environmentalists—just those who (implicitly or explicitly) support nativist ideas. There are environmental groups whose members reject nativism, racism, environmental privilege, and the Aspen Logic. Unfortunately, they do not have the ear of the media, Congress, the White House, and other policymakers.

As we grapple with how to sustain both our planet and its many peoples, the story of Aspen becomes a disturbing window into what is happening every day all over our country. We believe that the planet's health can be improved only if we also take care of the people who live on it. In the sections below, we highlight four essential themes that underscore the importance of this conflict in the Roaring Fork Valley: (1) the paradox of

immigrant labor markets in a global economy; (2) national immigration politics in the United States; (3) the racist and nativist roots of U.S. environmentalism; and (4) the interlinked practices of inclusion and exclusion in environmental politics.

The Paradox of Immigrant Labor in a Global Economy

There is an important paradox that underlies the presence of immigrants in the United States: the simultaneous economic dependence upon and social contempt for low-income immigrant labor.⁴⁰ Social contempt frequently reinforces the invisibility of immigrant labor—the informal, “off the books,” and hidden nature of much of the work newcomers do in this country. Recent events in Aspen signal that this region is an important case study for illuminating the complexities of policies regarding immigrant labor, environmental protection, and poverty in our increasingly global society. Many low-income immigrant workers experience a double-edged sword: they enter the United States as a result of growing transnational markets, but at the same time they face anti-immigrant legislation that punishes their arrival and existence. The significant rise in the Latino population has fueled a nationwide political backlash against Latino immigrants and bilingual education.

As we spent time in Aspen, we found that many people use the environment as a way to promote a particular romantic image of the Roaring Fork Valley as a pristine, post-industrial refuge. Such romance, however, is built on the backs of “unskilled” immigrants. There is nothing romantic about a Mexican dishwasher or landscaper who makes just enough money to scrape by, or the trailer park in a flood zone on the outskirts of town where many of these workers live. These conditions are both essential and invisible to the production of Aspen. Immigrant labor makes Aspen, according to its wealthy residents, “heaven on earth,” but keeping immigrants in the back room, as it were, away from the public eye allows elites a chance to enjoy the natural surroundings without the distraction of undesirable social elements.

Local policies, such as population-stabilization resolutions, are reflections of the paradox of immigrant labor and its uncomfortable reminders of invidious social inequalities. These actions by local governments are

important signposts of things to come and are worthy of serious public and scholarly consideration. Research on the future of immigrant labor requires that we examine the “new Latino immigration,” which includes understudied destinations such as the Rocky Mountain West.⁴¹ As many scholars and business leaders have noted, continued economic globalization (primarily the liberalization of barriers to trade and finance) fuels both the demand for cheap immigrant labor and maintains the pool of willing migrant workers.⁴² Following this trend, Aspen has experienced a growing number of immigrant workers. Our years of data gathering illustrated how the growing presence of low-income Latino immigrant workers challenged core social meanings that have constructed the image of Aspen as a pristine place of refuge away from the polluted, unsavory central cities. This image is essential to the continued economic prosperity of Aspen’s tourist industry. In response to the ideological disturbance created by the presence of poor ethnic migrants, various stakeholders in the region constructed a range of policies to address “the problem” and to reassert the importance of maintaining Aspen’s social, cultural, and ecological image. And, as business and government officials in tourist destinations know all too well, image is everything.

Increasing global capital expansion has had an accompanying effect of growing class inequalities, resulting in the contraction of the middle class in Aspen and the surrounding area. The exorbitant cost of living, accompanied by a depression of wages, has driven the native-born middle – and working-class populations out of the area. In this respect, this exclusive mountain resort is indicative of a growing number of towns and cities that find themselves increasingly dependent upon two economic extremes: a tourism-based economy of the wealthy, and those who serve them, many of whom are immigrants. The inequalities are stark and ever present. The visual images that gloss Aspen magazine covers feature stretch Range Rover limousines, black-tie fund-raisers, world-class ski slopes, and film celebrities who live part of the year in multimillion dollar, single-family homes. At the same time, Aspen is also a place where foreign-born workers drive thirty to one hundred miles round-trip daily to work in low-status jobs for low wages with few benefits. Many of these workers live in deplorable housing conditions, including cars, campers, and even caves. Our research focuses on Aspen and Colorado’s Roaring Fork Valley as an entree to a larger discussion of the place and persistence of the immigrant working poor in the global economy.

National Immigration Politics in the United States

Nativism in the United States has a long history. Benjamin Franklin was well known for his anxieties about German immigrants coming to Pennsylvania in the 1750s. He once wrote, "Unless the stream of their importation could be turned they will soon so outnumber us that all the advantages we have will not be able to preserve our language, and even our government will become precarious."⁴³ John Jay—one of the authors of the Federalist Papers and later a Supreme Court Justice—suggested in New York's Constitution that the state erect "a wall of brass around the country for the exclusion of Catholics."⁴⁴ Under the 1798 Alien Act, President John Adams was given the power to deport anyone he considered "dangerous" to national security. The list of anti-immigrant policies in the United States from its origins to the present is too lengthy to consider here, but it makes one thing clear: as much as this country may be a "nation of immigrants," it has also always been a nation of nativists.⁴⁵

Nativism grew intensely in the 1990s due to a combination of factors. The nation experienced a growing sense of economic insecurity, an increasing rift between the rich and the poor, and an increase in immigration. Census predictions for the year 2000 and beyond continued to stress that whites would become the minority in several states (which did happen), feeding a growing anxiety among many European Americans. Moreover, economic globalization, free trade agreements, and the intensified privatization of public resources contributed to economic insecurity, declines in real wages, a continued disempowerment of the labor movement and unions, a major rise in the temporary employment sector, and significant cutbacks in the social safety net including welfare and health care funding.⁴⁶ Taken together, these dynamics fueled nativist movements and sentiment in the contemporary era.

Some of the principal fears among the U.S. citizenry include the idea that immigrants are "taking jobs" away from native-born persons; that immigrants place a strain on public services (such as welfare or general assistance); and that immigrants threaten the cultural fabric of the nation by introducing new languages, religions, and new racial/ethnic political power blocs. The associated anti-immigrant backlash has been virulent, punctuated at the policy level by the passage of California's Proposition

187, Arizona's Senate Bill 1070 (giving local law enforcement the authority to profile Latinos for possible deportation), a series of "anti-solicitation" ordinances targeting immigrant day laborers in cities around the nation, the Immigration Act of 1996 ("Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act"), the Welfare Reform of 1996 ("Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act"), the Antiterrorism and Effective Death Penalty Act of 1996, and the proliferation of "English only" legislation (or proposals) in several states around the nation.⁴⁷ On a broader public or popular cultural level, we observe the continued rise and dominance of nativist rhetoric in newspaper reporting and editorials, on conservative AM talk radio shows, in popular music, videos, and movies.⁴⁸ On the street and the Internet we see a rise in hate crimes and interpersonal violence directed at immigrant populations and those perceived to be foreign born. The border vigilante group, the Minuteman Project, has grown considerably in the wake of the anti-immigrant hysteria of recent years, and many hate groups including the Ku Klux Klan credit the immigration debate with their recent revival in membership.⁴⁹ These groups have focused more and more on the "threat" of immigration from Mexico in particular—with rhetoric of the coming *reconquista* of the American Southwest. Such traditional nativist fears have only been compounded and intensified by the fallout associated with the al-Qaeda attacks of September 11, 2001 and the ensuing "War on Terror."⁵⁰

Moreover, during the 1990s, there was a marked rise in hate crimes against other groups. According to the National Asian Pacific American Legal Consortium (NAPALC) there was a 13 percent increase in reported anti-Asian incidents between 1998 and 1999 alone. That consortium found that South Asians were the most targeted among Asian Americans and that vandalism was the most common form of anti-Asian discrimination. This trend has continued. There was a huge spike in anti-Asian hate crimes and violence in 2001, following the attacks of September 11, 2001, with South Asians—particularly Indians and Pakistanis—receiving a disproportionate level of abuse, including Sikh men who wear turbans and long beards, two of the symbols that have come to be associated with terrorism in the media, despite the fact that Sikhs are not Muslims. That year there were 507 bias-motivated hate crimes against Asian Pacific Americans, with threats, vandalism, arson, rape, and assaults with baseball bats, metal poles, and guns.⁵¹ These patterns

occur not only in U.S. cities and in immigrant-owned stores and small businesses but at universities and colleges as well. For example, in the 1990s, anti-Asian vandalism at California's Stanford University included such threats as "rape all oriental bitches," "kill all gooks," and "I'm a real white American."⁵² In February 2008, the day before the National Day of Remembrance of the internment of thousands of Japanese Americans during World War II, a student newspaper at the University of Colorado-Boulder published a column stating "If it's war the Asians want . . . It's war they'll get." The column advocated forcing Asian Americans to perform demeaning acts and suggested that they should be "hogtied."⁵³ The column was published on the eve of the university's Diversity Summit. Such violence, both verbal and physical, marks certain spaces as legitimate only for certain groups.

The recent upsurge of anti-immigrant sentiment is, in fact, nothing new at all. Such popular anger against newcomers has been a continuous hallmark of U.S. history, in which ordinary citizens, labor unions, politicians, journalists, academics, the courts, and environmentalists have all vigorously participated.⁵⁴ Immigrants are blamed for producing strains on the carrying capacity of local, regional, national, and global ecosystems.⁵⁵ Politicians, talk show hosts, foundations, best-selling authors, and even environmentalists have made this claim, which is interesting: much of the evidence reveals that many immigrant communities are actually exposed to pollution (created by others) at higher rates than their privileged citizen counterparts. In our haste to blame immigrants for environmental decline, we should not forget that immigrants often pay the price of modern "progress" in the form of environmental racism, via pesticides exposure and residential proximity to locally unwanted land uses (LULUs) such as power plants.⁵⁶ Latinos also experience higher risks of exposure to lead-paint poisoning and asthma in New York, a lack of access to parks and public transportation, and significant threats to land ownership in the American Southwest as a result of federal energy policies.⁵⁷ In Aspen, with regard to the issue of ecological footprints, the extravagance of the wealthy, white, part-time residents in that city is part of its lore and lure; immigrants are only there to support the leisure economy.

The contentious debate regarding immigrants and the environment continues. From the intensity of the discourse, it appears that this issue elicits some core anxieties among native-born Americans.

Racist and Nativist Roots of U.S. Environmentalism

Proponents of immigration control policies often define their actions as courageous because they make these decisions despite the historically racist implications of population control. The Aspen councilman Terry Paulson stated, "This is one of those touchy subjects that no one wants to talk about."⁵⁸ The former Colorado governor Richard Lamm—a part-time Aspen resident and supporter of the resolution—addressed the issue of cultural sensitivity and immigration policy by saying, "It's not a question of compassion. It's a question of what kind of country do we want to leave our children."⁵⁹ Using a similar argument to stress the urgency of immigration control, Paulson described the "denial" of population growth's negative impacts as a "hate crime" against future generations. In effect, an argument of reverse discrimination is made on behalf of native-born, white children. This priority of preserving an intergenerational legacy is a vital tool for diffusing the specter of race and racism, one that shadows population control arguments. In this way, environmental politics plays a central role as ecological preservation is cast as an imperative for the survival of the next generation of white Americans. The questions of preservation for whom and for what purpose are critical in the nativist agenda, but are always reduced to the simple "citizen/white versus immigrant/other" framework. Environmentalism, then, allows nativists to remove race from the conversation and provide a safer, more comfortable grounding for the white majority calling for drastic limits on immigration.

Thus, environmentalism plays a crucial role as a solution, particularly because it can obscure the growing racialization of poverty in the idyllic, staunchly Democratic-voting, resort town of Aspen. Environmentalism, as a palatable rationale for anti-immigrant policies, brings together the strangest of bedfellows—the compassionate liberal activist with the rational social conservative. As a social movement, environmentalism brings with it a checkered past, due largely to its links with nativist movements. The alleged negative environmental impact of immigration is a charge levied by many nativist organizations, a dimension of America's recurring anti-immigrant backlash with deep historical roots.⁶⁰

The innocent claim that environmentalists in the Roaring Fork Valley only want to "preserve our way of life" is belied by the fact that such a

lifestyle requires the domination of the environment and of certain groups of people (e.g., people of color, immigrants, and workers who make such privileges possible for the wealthy and mostly white elite). It also underscores an enduring belief that there are essential differences between people of varying ethnic, racial, and national backgrounds. Recall the language from the Pitkin County resolution on population stabilization, which stated "Legal and illegal immigration combined is too high for assimilation."

A number of scholars have described this kind of language as a core part of the "new racism," one that no longer relies on outdated and abhorrent biological notions of superior versus inferior peoples. Instead, the new racism is based on the idea that there are insurmountable and incompatible *cultural* distinctions between peoples.⁶¹ As the sociologist Howard Winant notes, "the reinterpretation of racialized differences as matters of culture and nationality, rather than as fundamental human attributes somehow linked to phenotype, turns out to justify exclusionary politics and policy far better than traditional white supremacist arguments can do."⁶² The new racism is a critical component of the "post-racial" (or "colorblind") approach to race that has been sweeping the nation for some time—since civil rights legislation formally outlawed public acts of racism.⁶³ Post-racial perspectives on racial inequality deny the *existence* of race and therefore are inherently blind to racism. People and institutions approaching race in this way can, at the same time, employ the new racism to argue that certain groups are unassimilable based on other characteristics (language, religion, nationality, etc.).⁶⁴

While we agree with scholars writing about the new racism that many biological notions of racial difference have given way to other frameworks, our focus on the immigration-environment nexus reveals that such ideas are unfortunately not entirely outdated. In the case of the Roaring Fork Valley and the general immigration-environment debate, we observe both cultural and biological arguments at work: nativist environmentalists claim that nations must obey the *laws of nature* in order to achieve (and not threaten) the "natural" biological balance of population and environment. This is what terms like "carrying capacity" and "population-environment balance" mean. These are cultural ideas masked as scientific facts and are therefore not open to debate in the minds of advocates. It is crucial to understand how the environment fits into and influences racial and immigration conflicts today because biology still plays a significant role.⁶⁵

Inclusion, Exclusion, and Environmental Politics

The geographer David Sibley bluntly writes that Western society is based on exclusion.⁶⁶ But the flipside of exclusion is inclusion, so every act that repels others sends a message of belonging to those who are "like us." Even so, it is more than just about the persecution of one community so that another community gains power. It is more insidious and disturbing than that. In 1984 President Ronald Reagan launched a media campaign titled "It's Morning Again in America," which offered rosy images and remembrances of 1950s suburban, white neighborhoods basking in peace and harmony (all this at a time of serious political and racial discord).⁶⁷ This kind of imagery has clear parallels to the nativist environmentalist vision of the future and is indeed about exclusion of some groups while building walls and boundaries to include a select few. Inclusion of this kind is also about building community, about creating strong, meaningful ties and social networks among elites so that they can enjoy their lives and find comfort in this world. Unfortunately, that inclusion appears to be dependent upon exclusion and domination of others. Sibley writes that "The human landscape can be read as a landscape of exclusion. . . . Because power is expressed in the monopolization of space and the relegation of weaker groups in society to less desirable environments."⁶⁸ He suggests that we take a closer look at the "curious practices" of the "majority . . . who consider themselves to be normal or mainstream" in order to uncover "the oddness of the ordinary."⁶⁹ Similarly, the historian Patricia Limerick contends, in thinking about U.S. history, "it has become essential to follow the policy of cautious street crossers: Remember to look both ways."⁷⁰

Sibley catalogues ways in which whiteness has been equated with purity and hygiene in the colonial world, and how dark skin and people racialized as the "other" were equated with filth, dirt, uncleanness, and therefore placed outside of civilized society (e.g., Roma, African Americans, Irish, Aborigines, and Jews as rats, and others associated with pigs, cockroaches, trash, and sewers). This ideology extends itself to perhaps the greatest challenge for the environmental movement in the United States: the underlying cultural, racial, and economic elitism of environmentalism that often consciously and blatantly associates clean environments with whiter and wealthier people.

The classical sociologist Thorstein Veblen characterized society's elites as people who relegate lower-status groups to menial labor, even though such jobs are the foundation of a society. The higher-status people often engage in what Veblen famously termed "conspicuous consumption"—a wasteful use of resources and money to maintain a visible standard of social prestige.⁷¹ It is regrettable and dangerous that nativist environmentalists in the Roaring Fork Valley and elsewhere refuse to target the role that elite conspicuous consumption plays in ecological degradation.

Another aspect of conspicuous elite behavior and its effects on inequality concerns U.S. foreign policy. Scott Chaplin, a Roaring Fork Valley social justice activist, wrote a guest editorial in a local newspaper echoing the thoughts of many progressives and immigrant-rights advocates. Specifically, he made an association between U.S. foreign and economic policy and the rise of immigration:

Most immigrants coming to the United States . . . come here due to the lack of economic opportunity in their countries. . . . Unfortunately the lack of economic opportunity in many "developing" countries has been caused in no small part by U.S. foreign policy, which for too long has created a sad legacy of oppression and poverty in the world by placing corporate interests ahead of democracy and human rights concerns. . . . What do we as citizens of the United States owe the people of these countries for overthrowing or undermining their democracies? What do we owe them for supporting their wealthy elite at the expense of the economic opportunity that could have been available to the majority of their citizens? . . . Can we really take a high moral stand and say to those who want to immigrate here, "Yes, we may have destroyed your democracies and created economic hardship for you, but we need to protect our environment, so you can not come here."⁷²

Scholars and journalists have produced books, studies, and reports that support Chaplin's contention that, generally speaking, U.S. policy in Latin America since the late nineteenth century has frequently involved a series of anti-democratic practices aimed at geopolitical and economic dominance that instill terror among publics and unparalleled political destabilization.⁷³ For example, in many Latin American nations, U.S.-supported state violence laid the groundwork for free-market economic reforms in

the 1980s and 1990s, which mandated lower tariff barriers, cut social services, privatized public utilities, increased unemployment, and widened the gap between the rich and the poor. These reforms were demanded by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) to not only facilitate the payment of large foreign debts incurred during the dictatorships but also to make it easier for transnational corporations to penetrate domestic markets and exploit the land and labor of ordinary Latin Americans. Undocumented immigration to the United States is just one of the consequences.

Environmental Privilege and the Resort

The resort vacation spot and second-home getaway has an appeal that few people with the means to access such places can resist. This is nothing new. In a pioneering study of histories of environmental justice struggles in the United States, Dorceta Taylor locates what we would call environmental privilege in this country, dating back to the its earliest days. For example, Taylor describes how, since the seventeenth century, wealthy elites of New York and New England responded to the environmental turmoil of the cities by privatizing or acquiring green space, building large country estates clustered among other rich residents in exclusive enclaves on the edge of urban areas, and excluding undesirables (Jews and people of color) from these spaces and social networks.⁷⁴ One of the many places those elites established was the "summer colony," known as the Hamptons. In *The End of the Hamptons*, Corey Dolgon explores the dynamics of environmental privilege through the lens of conquest and resistance that characterizes class struggles on Long Island's East End. Dolgon makes a compelling point regarding the significance of that exclusive resort community. He argues, "studying Long Island's East End is important precisely because the area exhibits social forces and cultural experiences similar to those that exist elsewhere in the region, in the nation, and in the world."⁷⁵ He states that while the pressing issues found on Long Island are common, such high-profile locations as the Hamptons provide an "animated" site to bring together a complex narrative of power, property, and place. We would argue that Aspen is another key "animated" site for exploring these issues as they relate to race, immigration, citizenship, and the

environment. The stories of the Hamptons and Aspen are important because we see that environmental privilege is quite common, and that it is always contested at some level.

The AOL Travel website recently announced its "Top Ten American Resort Towns and Weekend Getaways." The Hamptons made the top of the list, followed by Aspen at number two. The entry on the Hamptons states, "The old-money mansions and picturesque villages share acreage with farms, vineyards and forests" and refers to our town of choice in Colorado with the following declaration: "ultimate luxury in Aspen is not the exception, it's the rule." The rest of the list includes Palm Springs (California), Jackson (Wyoming), Key West (Florida), Cherry Hills Village (Colorado), Hilton Head Island (South Carolina), Newport Beach (California), Lake Geneva (Wisconsin), and Sandpoint (Idaho). Featured attractions invariably involve hiking, beaches, horseback riding, spas, ski lodges, boating, canoeing, "world-class golf," galleries, boutiques, "fine restaurants," "upscale activities," "an absence of retail businesses . . . underscoring the echelon of your surroundings," "austere beauty," and "breathtaking scenery."⁷⁶ We could add Martha's Vineyard, Vail, Pebble Beach, Miami Beach, and many other towns to this list. We see Aspen mirrored everyday at numerous other centers of environmental privilege around the nation.

Using Aspen as a strategic site, our goal is to contribute to a larger discussion of the sociological links among immigrant labor, the environment, and race and class inequalities within the global economy. The increasingly globalized reach of market economies contributes to the continuing presence of working poor, immigrant communities across the United States and many other global North communities.

While one of our primary emphases is the politics of immigration—not immigrants themselves—throughout this book we consider the immigrant worker's experience of living the existence of someone whose labor is embraced while his or her social existence is often cursed. In the course of our research, we found ourselves in a fortunate position in which immigrant workers—some of whom were in quite vulnerable situations—trusted us with their personal stories of immigration, work and labor, and raising families. They gave us candid reflections on how they survive, whom they work for, and the nature of local politics. We were able to gain their trust because of our relationships with well-respected community leaders from social service, religious, media, and advocacy organizations. While most

Latino immigrants in the Roaring Fork Valley come from Mexico, many others also traveled from Central and South America. Most of them work long hours in hotels, for landscaping services, in food service institutions, or in construction. It was clear in our interviews that depending on one's social position and immigration status, Aspen is an entirely different place for different people. It was evident that one's privilege and position within the very distinct racial and class hierarchy dramatically affects one's sense of geography. As one interviewee replied in response to our question as to whether he finds time to enjoy the famous Rocky Mountains that surround the valley: "Mountains? What mountains?"