

The Chicken Trail: Following Workers, Migrants, and Corporations across the Americas. By Kathleen C. Schwartzman. Ithaca, N.Y.: ILR Press, 2013. Pp. xii+202. \$24.95 (paper).

Gerardo Otero
Simon Fraser University

The Spanish word for chicken is pollo, referring to both the bird and to a migrant who crosses the border in search of a job in the United States. *The Chicken Trail: Following Workers, Migrants, and Corporations across the Americas* examines the history of poultry production in the United States and Mexico, describing how this industry has been affected by neo-liberalism and NAFTA. Kathleen C. Schwartzman also wades into the U.S. immigration debate, which she characterizes in a Manichean fashion: one is either a nativist or racist (as dubbed by opponents of this group) or a “bleeding heart liberal.” Responding to this polarization, she offers a moralistic solution.

The author starts by unraveling a dilemma that is both American and global in scope. Globally, neoliberalism and free trade have undermined the basis of livelihood for millions of people in developing countries, which often compels them to emigrate. Meanwhile, economic transformation in the United States leaves it with manually skilled jobs that seemingly “nobody wants,” desirable jobs that are outsourced overseas, and jobs for which Americans are not qualified. This book focuses on the intertwined predicament of a “push” of emigration from developing nations and the “pull” of U.S. jobs. Tracing a single commodity chain, Schwartzman applies a nuanced qualitative and quantitative analysis to contest the validity of the “commonsense” neoliberal economic model that generated such a dilemma.

Schwartzman’s central argument is about how the U.S. poultry industry confronted a dual crisis since the 1980s: overproduction and declining profits that followed the introduction of Taylorist production techniques

accessing union rights, migrants were generally “fired” after 90 days and re-hired the same day under different names. The issue was not that African-American workers no longer wanted the dirty, dangerous, diffi

author attributes price controls to an “outgrowth” of Mexico’