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SALVADORAN IMAGINARIES
Mediated Identities and Cultures of Consumption

Cecilia M. Rivas

"In this excellent, innovative, nuanced, and empirically rich work, Rivas examines transnational exchanges, profound and rapid social change, and maps a geography of marginalization in a nation without borders."

—Cecilia Menjívar, author of Enduring Violence: Ladina Women’s Lives in Guatemala

"In this landmark study of postwar Salvadoran transnationalism, Cecilia M. Rivas illuminates with profound insight and interpretive power the world-making imaginary of Salvadoran migrants and their aspirations to construct a borderless nation."

—Alicia Schmidt Camacho, Yale University

Ravaged by civil war throughout the 1980s and 1990s, El Salvador has now emerged as a study in contradictions. It is a country where urban call centers and shopping malls exist alongside rural poverty. It is a land now at peace but still grappling with a legacy of violence. It is a place marked by deep social divides, yet offering a surprising abundance of inclusive spaces. Above all, it is a nation without borders, as widespread emigration during the war has led Salvadorans to develop a truly transnational sense of identity.

SALVADORAN IMAGINARIES: Mediated Identities and Cultures of Consumption (Paper $25.95, 978-0-8135-6461-6, April 2014), by Cecilia M. Rivas, takes us on a journey through twenty-first century El Salvador and to the diverse range of sites where the nation’s postwar identity is being forged. Combining field ethnography with media research, Rivas deftly toggles between the physical spaces where the new El Salvador is starting to emerge and the virtual spaces where Salvadoran identity is being imagined, including newspapers, literature, and digital media. This interdisciplinary approach enables her to explore the multitude of ways that Salvadorans negotiate between reality and representation, between local neighborhoods and transnational imagined communities, between present conditions and dreams for the future.

Everyday life in El Salvador may seem like a simple matter, but Rivas digs deeper, across many different layers of society, revealing a wealth of complex feelings that the nation’s citizens have about power, opportunity, safety, migration, and community. Filled with first-hand interviews and unique archival research, SALVADORAN IMAGINARIES offers a fresh take on an emerging nation and its people.

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