



Gang Life in Two Cities: An Insider's Journey

Robert J Duran

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Refusing to cast gangs in solely criminal terms, Robert J. Durán, a former gang member turned scholar, recasts such groups as an adaptation to the racial oppression of colonization in the American Southwest. Developing a paradigm rooted in ethnographic research and almost two decades of direct experience with gangs, Durán completes the first-ever study to follow so many marginalized groups so intensely for so long, revealing their core characteristics, behavior, and activities within two unlikely American cities.

Durán spent five years in Denver, Colorado, and Ogden, Utah, conducting 145 interviews with gang members, law enforcement officers, prosecutors, and other relevant individuals. From his research, he constructs a comparative outline of the emergence and criminalization of Latino youth groups, the ideals and worlds they create, and the reasons for their persistence. He also underscores the failures of violent gang suppression tactics, which have only further entrenched these groups within the barrio. Encouraging cultural activists and current and former gang members to pursue grassroots empowerment, Durán proposes new solutions to racial oppression that challenge and truly alter the conditions of gang life.

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