



Feasts and Celebrations in North American Ethnic Communities

Ramon A. Gutierrez

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Jazz funerals in New Orleans, Halloween parades in Greenwich Village, harvest rituals, Easter pilgrimages, and folk pageants all serve to reaffirm the cultural vitality of ethnic communities and simultaneously permit them to challenge the established order and beliefs. The twelve essays in this volume explore a range of cultural traditions, including those of African Americans, Hispanics, Filipinos, West Indians, rural whites, and contemporary urban residents and gays.

Discussed are the ways in which celebrations infuse life with rituals, ceremonies, and festive events all the while bringing an essential and rich spirit to everyday existence. By considering celebrations occurring in a variety of cultural settings, we see how each event is vital to the well-being of an ethnic community as well as permitting people to reinvent and affirm their heritage. Each of the essays considers the multiple and often contradictory levels on which festivals can be viewed: celebratory events occurring on a contested boundary between secular or sacred, incorporating rituals of rebellion, resistance, and protest, often swerving between the libertine and the respectable.

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