



Class Acts: An Anthropology of Urban Workers and Their Union

E. Paul Durrenberger, Suzan Erem

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American labor leaders are constantly developing new programs to revive the union movement. What happens when these plans collide with the daily lives of front-line union staff and members? This book examines the often conflicting interests of key players in the trenches of a national effort to bring back the American labor movement. Brutally honest, funny, never dull, this anthropological ethnography shows the daily struggles of union members today to bring about positive change and hold together their urban labor union in an era of globalization, outsourcing, and deindustrialization. A union activist and an anthropologist (the authors) pair up to offer insideoutside views of labor unions and of how anthropological fieldwork is done. Explaining, coaching, and warning Paul of hazards, Suzan, the communications director for the Local, provides inside views and details of day-to-day interactions. Paul, the anthropologist, provides outside analytical views that related Suzan's experiences and his own observations to the wider view anthropology offers through ethnography, holism, and comparativism. The result is a story of one dynamic union local, one anthropological study, and the lit fuse that connects them until the end.

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