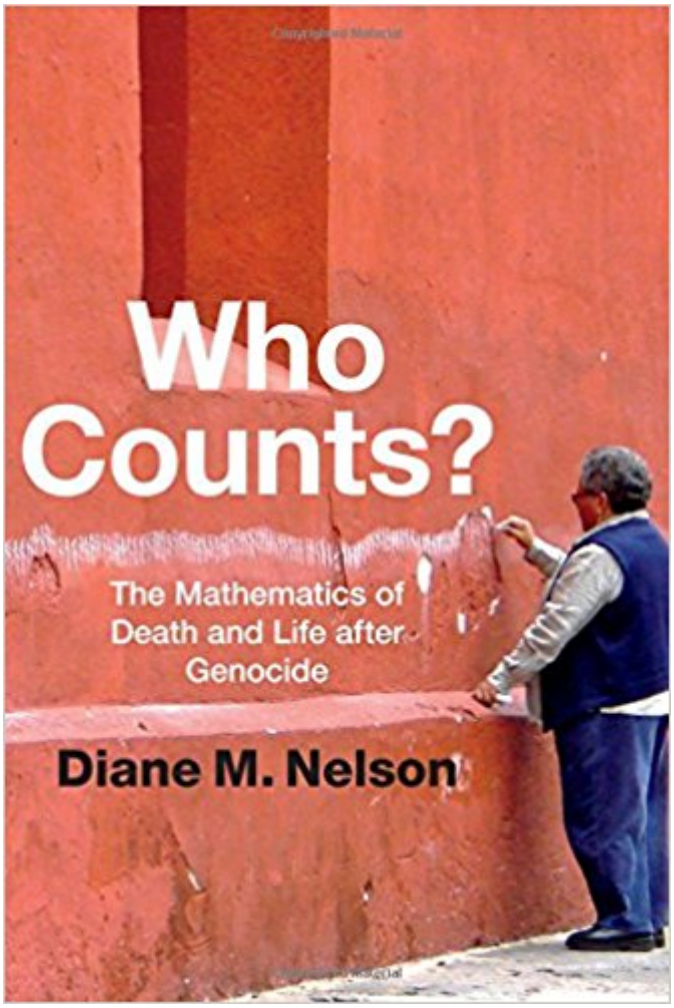
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Who Counts?: The Mathematics Of Death And Life After Genocide



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Synopsis

In Who Counts? Diane M. Nelson explores the social life of numbers, teasing out the myriad roles math plays in Guatemalan state violence, economic exploitation, and disenfranchisement, as well as in Mayan revitalization and grassroots environmental struggles. In the aftermath of thirty-six years of civil war, to countÃ¢â ¬â •both numerically and in the sense of having valueÃ¢â ¬â •is a contested and qualitative practice of complex calculations encompassing war losses, migration, debt, and competing understandings of progress. Nelson makes broad connections among seemingly divergent phenomena, such as debates over reparations for genocide victims, Ponzi schemes, and antimining movements. Challenging the presumed objectivity of Western mathematics, Nelson shows how it flattens social complexity and becomes a raced, classed, and gendered skill that colonial powers considered beyond the grasp of indigenous peoples. Yet the Classic Maya are famous for the precision of their mathematics, including conceptualizing zero long before Europeans. Nelson shows how Guatemala's indigenous population is increasingly returning to Mayan numeracy to critique systemic inequalities with the goal of being countedÃ¢â ¬â •in every sense of the word.Ã Â Ã Â

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

"What work do numbers do in calculating catastrophic loss? What other modes of counting are needed to remake the world in light of ongoing violence? No algorithm can capture the conceptual richness or importance of this book. Diane M. NelsonÃ¢â ¬â„¢s special form of bookkeeping is nothing less than a revelation."Ã Â (Joseph Masco, author of The Theater of Operations: National

Security Affect from the Cold War to the War on Terror)"'Life is painting a picture not doing a sum,' Oliver Wendell Holmes once said; the diversity of human experience and the complexities of culture canÃ¢â ¬â„¢t be explained by formula (no matter what our social scientists say). Ã Â Holmes's observation is wonderfully brought to life by Diane M. Nelson in her compelling new ethnography, Who Counts? Building on her previous path breaking scholarship on Guatemala, Nelson creatively and empathetically documents the many ways in which a postgenocidal society struggles against the stifling cunning of neoliberal regimentationÃ¢â ¬â •against, in other words, extinction by other means."Ã Â (Greg Grandin, author of Empire of Necessity: Slavery, Freedom, and Deception in the New World)"...I highly recommend the book to anyone interested in Guatemala, postgenocidal reconstruction, environmental justice movements, or the social embeddedness of economic rationality." (Rebecca Nelson Anthropology Book Forum 2016-06-01)"In the end, it is a meditation on both Guatemala and numbers that Nelson offers, and . . . Ã Â for me her book succeeds on both counts." (Douglas V. Porpora American Ethnologist 2017-05-01)

Diane M. Nelson is Professor of Cultural Anthropology at Duke University and the author of A Finger in the Wound: Body Politics in Quincentennial Guatemala; she is also the author of Reckoning: The Ends of War in Guatemala and coeditor of War by Other Means: Aftermath in Post-Genocide Guatemala, both also published by Duke University Press.Ã Â

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