



Ethnicity, Inc. (Chicago Studies in Practices of Meaning)

John L. Comaroff, Jean Comaroff

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In *Ethnicity, Inc.* anthropologists John L. and Jean Comaroff analyze a new moment in the history of human identity: its rampant commodification. Through a wide-ranging exploration of the changing relationship between culture and the market, they address a pressing question: Wherein lies the future of ethnicity?

Their account begins in South Africa, with the incorporation of an ethno-business in venture capital by a group of traditional African chiefs. But their horizons are global: Native American casinos; Scotland's efforts to brand itself; a Zulu ethno-theme park named Shakaland; a world religion declared to be intellectual property; a chiefdom made into a global business by means of its platinum holdings; San "Bushmen" with patent rights potentially worth millions of dollars; nations acting as commercial enterprises; and the rapid growth of marketing firms that target specific ethnic populations are just some of the diverse examples that fall under the Comaroffs' incisive scrutiny. These phenomena range from the disturbing through the intriguing to the absurd. Through them, the Comaroffs trace the contradictory effects of neoliberalism as it transforms identities and social being across the globe.

Ethnicity, Inc. is a penetrating account of the ways in which ethnic populations are remaking themselves in the image of the corporation—while corporations coopt ethnic practices to open up new markets and regimes of consumption. Intellectually rigorous but leavened with wit, this is a powerful, highly original portrayal of a new world being born in a tectonic collision of culture, capitalism, and identity.

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