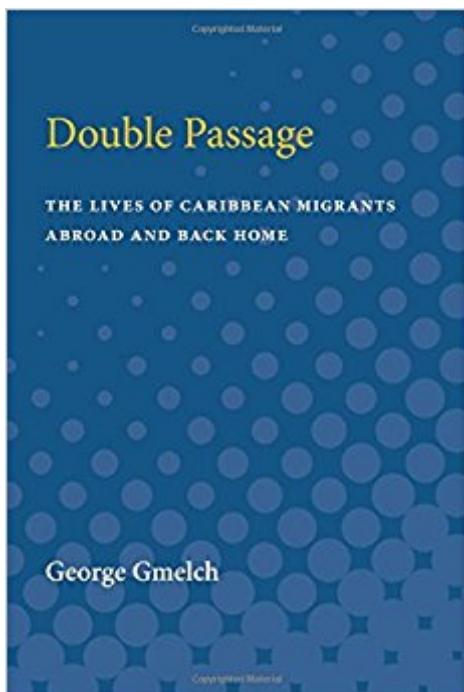


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Double Passage: The Lives Of Caribbean Migrants Abroad And Back Home



Synopsis

Oral histories reveal the attitudes and emotions associated with emigration and return.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Based mainly on oral histories of 13 Barbadians who migrated to Britain and North America, this book argues cogently that the experiences of these migrants and the forces influencing them are more diverse than most studies assume. Gmelch (*The Irish Tinkers: Urbanization of an Itinerant People*) writes smoothly, first explaining the history and culture of Barbados, then analyzing patterns of West Indian migration. Clearly a sensitive interviewer, Gmelch has elicited insightful stories: one migrant to England found Africans more prejudiced than whites; another returned with a newfound sense of her black identity, and a student in Canada made a lifelong friend of a classmate. Particularly interesting are the thoughts of leading Barbadian journalist John Wickham, who returned to decry his country's ``rampant nationalism,'' and of calypso musician The Mighty Gabby, who gained his political education in Manhattan's garment district and returned home a protest singer. Gmelch concludes by exploring trends in his subjects' experiences; unlike most social scientists, he concludes that return migrants do contribute new ideas to their home society.

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These oral histories of 13 Barbadians who emigrated to England and the United States and later returned home make for charming and interesting reading. Comparing the Barbados of their

childhood with the one they found on their return, the interviewees also contrast life there with life in their adopted countries. Gmelch (anthropology, Union Coll.) places the narratives in a historical context and summarizes what all the emigrants had in common. A seven-page bibliography, several maps, and photos of each of the narrators round out this focused and informative book.

Recommended for cultural anthropology, Caribbean history, and African diaspora collections and for public libraries where there is a large population of Caribbean immigrants.- Anita L. Cole, Miami-Dade P.L. System, Fla.Copyright 1993 Reed Business Information, Inc.

Great book full of firsthand accounts. The author got out of the way and let the subjects tell the story.

Like all of Gmelch's books, this is well written in a non-academic accessible style. The book presents well-rounded and humane portraits of the complex lives of migrants, relating the Caribbean experience of movement to the sense of 'home' more effectively than most abstract discussions of transnationality. This would be an excellent choice for any introductory class on Caribbean culture.

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