



Dream a Little: Land and Social Justice in Modern America

Dorothee E. Kocks

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In this innovative and exciting synthesis of historical analysis, literary criticism, and personal essay, Dorothee E. Kocks explores the links between place and political ideals in the twentieth century, focusing in particular on the iconography of the American West. *Dream a Little* explores the American tradition of using the land to reveal and elaborate our dreams for social justice.

Writing with a novelist's sensitivity toward language, Kocks explores the idea that Americans have historically looked to the land for answers to society's problems. To illustrate this point, she shows that the frontier state with its homestead program was actually the predecessor of the modern welfare state. Instead of money, the federal government gave away land. Kocks shows how we have "forgotten" the politics and history behind this giveaway and unravels the significance of this forgetting for our national consciousness.

In the second half of the book, Kocks journeys into three symbolic landscapes: the West, the family farm, and the small community. She looks at these landscapes through the eyes of writers Mari Sandoz and Josephine Johnson, and civil rights activist Ella Baker. Interweaving her own life experiences in this analysis, she traces the relationship between geography and democracy, and of the hopes we attach to the West.

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