



# **The Price of Nuclear Power: Uranium Communities and Environmental Justice (Nature, Society, and Culture)**

*Stephanie A. Malin*

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Rising fossil fuel prices and concerns about greenhouse gas emissions are fostering a nuclear power renaissance and a revitalized uranium mining industry across the American West. In *The Price of Nuclear Power*, environmental sociologist Stephanie Malin offers an on-the-ground portrait of several uranium communities caught between the harmful legacy of previous mining booms and the potential promise of new economic development. Using this context, she examines how shifting notions of environmental justice inspire divergent views about nuclear power's sustainability and equally divisive forms of social activism.

Drawing on extensive fieldwork conducted in rural isolated towns such as Monticello, Utah, and Nucla and Naturita, Colorado, as well as in upscale communities like Telluride, Colorado, and incorporating interviews with community leaders, environmental activists, radiation regulators, and mining executives, Malin uncovers a fundamental paradox of the nuclear renaissance: the communities most hurt by uranium's legacy—such as high rates of cancers, respiratory ailments, and reproductive disorders—were actually quick to support industry renewal. She shows that many impoverished communities support mining not only because of the employment opportunities, but also out of a personal identification with uranium, a sense of patriotism, and new notions of environmentalism. But other communities, such as Telluride, have become sites of resistance, skeptical of industry and government promises of safe mining, fearing that regulatory enforcement won't be strong enough. Indeed, Malin shows that the nuclear renaissance has exacerbated social divisions across the Colorado Plateau, threatening social cohesion. Malin further illustrates ways in which renewed uranium production is not a socially sustainable form of energy development for rural communities, as it is utterly dependent on unstable global markets.

*The Price of Nuclear Power* is an insightful portrait of the local impact of the nuclear renaissance and the social and environmental tensions inherent in the rebirth of uranium mining.

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