



Pillars of the Nation: Child Citizens and Ugandan National Development

Kristen E. Cheney

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How can children simultaneously be the most important and least powerful people in a nation? In her innovative ethnography of Ugandan children—the pillars of tomorrow’s Uganda, according to the national youth anthem—Kristen E. Cheney answers this question by exploring the daily contradictions children face as they try to find their places amid the country’s rapidly changing social conditions.

Drawing on the detailed life histories of several children, Cheney shows that children and childhood are being redefined by the desires of a young country struggling to position itself in the international community. She moves between urban schools, music festivals, and war zones to reveal how Ugandans are constructing childhood as an empowering identity for the development of the nation. Moreover, through her analysis of children’s rights ideology, national government strategy, and children’s everyday concerns, Cheney also shows how these young citizens are vitally linked to the global political economy as they navigate the pitfalls and possibilities for a brighter tomorrow.

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