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This new edition of Norgren and Nanda's classic updates their examination of the intersection of American cultural pluralism and law. They document and analyze legal challenges to the existing social order raised by many cultural groups, among them, Native Americans and Native Hawaiians, homeless persons, immigrants, disabled persons, and Rastafarians. In addition, they examine such current controversies as the culture wars in American schools and the impact of post-9/11 security measures on Arab and Muslim individuals and communities. The book also discusses more traditional challenges to the American legal system by women, homosexuals, African Americans, Latinos, Japanese Americans, and the Mormons and the Amish.

The new chapters and updated analyses in this Third Edition reflect recent, relevant court cases dealing with culture, race, gender, religion, and personal status. Drawing on court materials, state and federal legislation, and legal ethnographies, the text analyzes the ongoing tension between, on the one hand, the need of different groups for cultural autonomy and equal rights, and on the other, the necessity of national unity and security. The text integrates the authors' commentary with case descriptions set in historical, cultural, political, and economic context. While the authors' thesis is that law is an instrument of social policy that has generally furthered an assimilationist agenda in American society, they also point out how in different periods, under different circumstances, and with regard to different groups, law has also some opportunity for cultural autonomy.