Across America, gated communities are creating new forms of exclusion and residential segregation, exacerbating existing social cleavages. This retreat to secured enclaves materially and symbolically contradicts aspects of an idealized American ethos and values, threatens democratic spatial practices such as access to open space, and creates another barrier to social interaction and tolerance of diverse cultural, racial, and social groups. Low’s ethnographic research queries the dramatic increase in the numbers of Americans moving to secured residential enclaves—16 million people or about 6% of all households—and invites a more complex account of their motives and values.

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