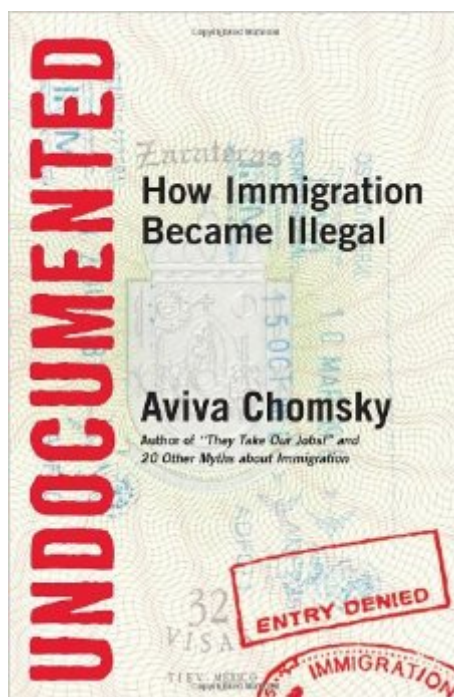


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# Undocumented: How Immigration Became Illegal



## Synopsis

Explores what it means to be undocumented in a legal, social, economic and historical context. In this illuminating work, immigrant rights activist Aviva Chomsky shows how "illegality" and "undocumentedness" are concepts that were created to exclude and exploit. With a focus on US policy, she probes how people, especially Mexican and Central Americans, have been assigned this status and to what ends. Blending history with human drama, Chomsky explores what it means to be undocumented in a legal, social, economic, and historical context. The result is a powerful testament of the complex, contradictory, and ever-shifting nature of status in America.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Excellent work on the concept and evolution of being "illegal" in America. Traces the development of that concept through the history of immigration to the present day. Chomsky's argument that national borders are arbitrary and that the right to maintain the sovereignty of those borders through "border control" is fraught with implications, may not set well with readers and may cause them to discount the rest of the book. At the very least, that would be an interesting source of discussion. Nevertheless, Chomsky is able to show how the idea of the "illegal immigrant" is a recent one and owes much to immigration reform that benefited prospective European immigrants and prejudiced Mexican immigration. How? By imposing new restrictions that broke up traditional patterns of migration, work and acculturation by immigrants and replaced them with a gamed system that exposed immigrants to exploitation by employers. Chomsky takes to task the "my ancestors came

here legally" myth and shows how immigration law and American prejudice privileged some immigrant groups over others, creating a dilemma in which new immigrants are not offered the opportunity to even get in line, as it were. Readers should come away with the understanding that rather than an ordered, efficient process that serves all equally, immigration law sometimes if not many times reinforces those prejudices or imposes undue burdens on likely immigrants. Chomsky elaborates of how immigration law frustrates rather than facilitates human rights and an efficient immigration process. She also, with no punches pulled, explains how immigrants employ fraud to try and keep up with ever changing demands. The solutions chapter at the end is the weakest, and does not really bridge the gap between theory and possibility. This book adds an important voice to the debates over immigration

Through obviously tireless research, Aviva has opened my eyes to how ignorant I was about immigration. Very sobering. This book makes the process of getting into the United States appear like an onion. It is multi-layered with so many different agendas, that as you peel back each layer, the more it smells. Then, somewhere along the way, you will cry for those who are caught up in this. There is a quote from the book that asks "Do you know of any historical example where society change has come about by people keeping quiet?" Aviva's writings show that she is not about to keep quiet. This book deserves to win prizes for its fortitude as well as its straight forward reporting. This should be read by anyone who is on the fence about immigration, or actually wants to seal up the border. You will think differently after.

This was a very good look at immigration from an excellent and compassionate scholar. She discusses the flaws in our immigration policies and how rallying against illegals is really just racist posturing.

I remember growing up in Tucson, there were not the problems we have today! Always puzzling why. This book describes the laws and political policies that came to be. For example, in the 1960s there was a guest worker program, and families would typically go home after the seasons harvest. Now, with crossing the border so dangerous, workers will stay and live in the US in hiding. Not daring to make the trip home. I gave 4 stars because the laws are very detailed, and over my head sometimes. Not the authors fault : )

This book gives a very realistic historical perspective to immigration in the US and offers some

explanation as to how what once was a very routine event, crossing the international border, became illegal. I grew up in the Southwest and have had a conservative flair to border issues. This book opened my eyes to the history and how the US has promulgated and complicated the issue of border crossing. One certainly does not need to agree with the contents or theory in its entirety, but this book offers a human view of crossing that has been politicized.

This book is an easy to read, historical account of how immigration became illegal. Facts that many choose to ignore are simply outlined for the reader to understand.

This book is everything I have been looking for. Finally a book on human rights for refugees and (im)migrants!

A disturbing book. I used it as background for a church workshop on illegal children immigrants.

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