

Undocumented: how immigration became illegal | review



Chomsky review

In Aviva Chomsky's novel *Undocumented: How Immigration Became Illegal* she emphasizes how the idea of immigration was built upon racism and bigotry. She stands behind her ideologies and believes that immigrants should be given a fair chance. Chomsky says, " Immigration simply should not be illegal...immigrants don't take American jobs! Immigrants do pay taxes! Immigrants are learning English!" (ix). Throughout the novel Chomsky is able to make valid points about the immigration policies that the United States has in place. Along with the discriminatory prison system, and the unjust treatment of immigrants in the U. S labor system that conveniences the economy of the United States. She demonstrates how we still live in a prejudiced system based on race, and how this system still exists when creating new U. S Policies. Chomsky overall argues that immigrants are human beings just like everybody else, the only thing that makes immigrants different is the fact that they are forbidden to have any basic rights that United States citizens have. Her goal is to reveal the unpredictable, unjust and sometimes unreasonable nature that US Immigration laws hold.

Who is Aviva Chomsky? Shes the daughter of Noam and Carol Chomsky who are both American linguists. She herself, is an academic historian, author and an activist. She is currently a professor of Latino and Caribbean studies at a university in Massachusetts: Salem State University. She earned her B. A in Spanish and Portuguese at the University of California at Berkeley, an M. A in history, also a Ph. D in history. Between 1976 and 1977, Chomsky worked for the United Farm Workers union. Working here is what ignited her attentiveness in the Spanish language, it not only brought her attention to <https://assignbuster.com/undocumented-how-immigration-became-illegal-review/>

language but it also brought attention to the lives of migrant workers, immigration labor, and social movements. Chomsky is known for her various books and articles about immigration, and she also has been an advocate for the Latino Community and immigrant rights since 1980.

Aviva mentions that laws are “made and enforced by humans” (pg. 1) and US immigration laws are often created to benefit a certain group of people, which is often the elite or first class individuals. Illegality was not much of a problem before the year 1965. The idea of somebody being an illegal was brought to life in 1965, before that immigration was barely seen as something negative. Mexicans and other Latino immigrants were usually the main targets of these new enforced laws. The reasons for this according to Aviva were economic, ideological and cultural changes.

Chomsky explains what streamlined immigrants are. This process is known as “operation streamline” and it began in the year 2005, it means migrants who cross the border “illegally” will be taken into custody and indicted with a serious criminal offense. Chomsky says, “the daily hearings fall somewhere between a kangaroo court and a slave auction” (pg 6). The conditions of the cell are unacceptable, at times placing up to eighty people in one tiny room, shackled up like a herd of cows. The challenges that Latino people also face is the judgement of labor. While people of Mexican descent have had an impact and contribution to the U. S. economy, immigrants helped the United States make more money, and on top of that they’re severely underpaid and still pay their taxes. United States citizens have claimed that the hiring of undocumented individuals have left them without any jobs, but in fact immigrants don’t take jobs from United States citizens, <https://assignbuster.com/undocumented-how-immigration-became-illegal-review/>

they get hired for jobs United States citizens won't do and don't want. The type of jobs immigrants end up doing are of low class, poor pay, no benefits, and zero job security. These type of jobs include such as: seasonal farm workers, meat processing, construction, cleaning and food services. There was something called the bracero program which brought Mexicans into the United States for manual labor, it was known as a legal way for Mexican immigrants to come to the United States for the sole purpose of seasonal labor, for the majority these immigrants would return to Mexico after the season was done, as they were viewed as expendable workers rather than potential citizens.

Chomsky's book has several clear and direct points. One of Chomsky's main objectives is to bring into light the historic circumstances that have guided how as of now the United States has dealt with illegal immigrants and immigration law, all due to a prejudiced vision of immigrants of color, especially of Mexicans and other individuals from Latin American countries. It is quite obvious that America's social injustices are still present to this day, although, Chomsky's book was published in 2014, five years later this book is still relevant to this day. I believe it is Especially relevant due to the fact that the U. S president is Donald Trump. Under the Trump administration this man has normalized racism, as he bluntly dehumanizes and gives hate speeches against Latinos. Not only that, but Trump has called white supremacists to be, " very fine people" (CNN).

The way Aviva Chomsky sympathizes and sees undocumented individuals as actual human beings is heartwarming. She mentions, " Every worker is also a human being. Like everyone else, undocumented workers have children and <https://assignbuster.com/undocumented-how-immigration-became-illegal-review/>

families” (pg 152). but as she mentions, “ more and more children have been affected by issues of status” (pg. 152). parents come to the United States because they want a better life for their children, as they want to flee from any potential violence and gangs, but as Chomsky mentions unfortunately these families can be split apart and it’s an extreme risk to take. Undocumented children also face challenges, such as discrimination from jobs and education.

Overall, Aviva Chomsky’s book is an excellent read. It was reasonable, and well designed for introducing the topic of immigration to undergrad students and to the general public. It was definitely a well written history of Latin American immigration and how it became “ illegal” in the United States. Her book, shows us how illegality has been manufactured from politics and prejudice. The way that she describes immigration is very eye opening nonetheless. It brings light to immigration issues, that are racialized, and the harsh and dreadful realities that many Latino immigrants face. Chomsky does a great job at describing why government has made laws this way, also at describing the argument that many Americans make about their ancestors coming here “ the right way” when in fact how could they come here the right way when no immigration laws existed at that point in time. The United States has always been taught to be the land of opportunities, but that has been proven over and over to not be an accurate statement. As a country, the United States government should provide reasonable laws relating to immigration, laws that are humane and provide an appropriate pathway to citizenship.

Sources

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