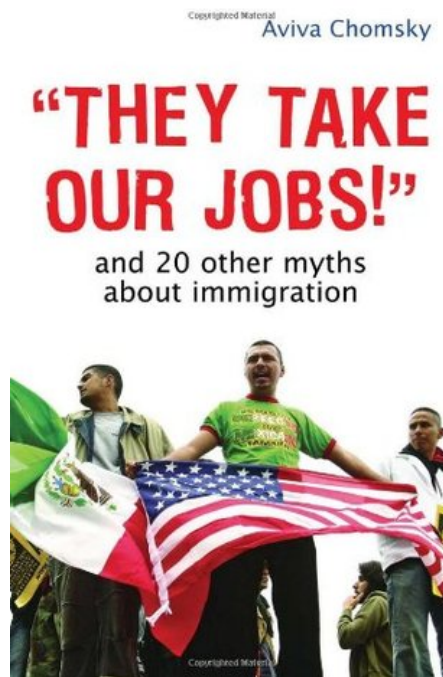




They Take Our Jobs!: And 20 Other Myths about Immigration

Aviva Chomsky

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Claims that immigrants take Americans' jobs, are a drain on the American economy, contribute to poverty and inequality, destroy the social fabric, challenge American identity, and contribute to a host of social ills by their very existence are openly discussed and debated at all levels of society. Chomsky dismantles twenty of the most common assumptions and beliefs underlying statements like "I'm not against immigration, only *illegal* immigration" and challenges the misinformation in clear, straightforward prose.

In exposing the myths that underlie today's debate, Chomsky illustrates how the parameters and presumptions of the debate distort how we think—and have been thinking—about immigration. She observes that race, ethnicity, and gender were historically used as reasons to exclude portions of the population from access to rights. Today, Chomsky argues, the dividing line is citizenship. Although resentment against immigrants and attempts to further marginalize them are still apparent today, the notion that non-citizens, too, are created equal is virtually absent from the public sphere. Engaging and fresh, this book will challenge common assumptions about immigrants, immigration, and U.S. history.

They Take Our Jobs!: And 20 Other Myths about Immigration Details

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Laura says

Why do conservatives get easy arguments like, "They take our jobs!" and us liberals have to expound on the historic, economic, and social structures of the last 3 centuries to get our point across? This doesn't seem fair.

Guillermo Galvan says

I just finished reading this book and I want to say "THANK YOU AVIVA!" I'm an educated Chicano from California so it's a really hot topic here. Many people are greatly misinformed about the subject of immigration. It's not completely their fault since it is a politically charged issue. We tend to listen to those that shout loudest (ahem* Fox News). Aviva dissects the 21 most voiced accusations about immigration, which prove to be myths depending on racist conventional wisdom.

Aviva elaborates on how neoliberal policies, primarily deregulation, in international business has allowed the exploitation of third world countries. The current immigration debate in the US is only fragment of a larger picture. She presents a complex issue in a straight forward manner, with her father's (Noam Chomsky) dry humor and moral obligation.

Another work in the name of rational thinking!

(Includes a works cited section to fact check.)

Rob says

I consider myself to be fairly, if not radically, pro-immigration. With that said, I don't think Chomsky is really interested in laying out a moral OR practical case for overhauling the immigration system. Chomsky doesn't seem to think that immigrants themselves, even when moving into living conditions below the American national mean, might boost their living standards so much relative to their former countries that it still is a net positive for global happiness.

It shouldn't be TOO surprising that Noam Chomsky's daughter uses mostly unexamined Marxist economics and conspiracy-thinking (e.g. that a global capitalist conspiracy works to keep wages down and keep people in poverty) to frame immigration as a front in the war between workers and capital.

I actually enjoyed this book, even though I disagree with almost everything Chomsky says, and I don't find her historical analysis to be a very convincing way to frame a modern debate about immigration today. Like her father, Chomsky uses history as a cudgel, implying that because certain policies and actions in American history were rooted in racism (which is undoubtedly true) that any system that arose from those actions must be entirely wrong. Chomsky doesn't provide an alternative history though - there isn't any examination of what a modern American might have looked like WITHOUT racial quotas, for example, or an examination of a country that got immigration policy "right" (and that stayed a country)

All told, this is worth a read as an opposing viewpoint, but I'm a little disappointed that the author didn't try to tackle any of the 'hard' questions about immigration, assimilation, democracy, and the ability to maintain national unity. We don't live in a nation of detached academics (the Chomskys might do well to remember this sometimes...) so practical concerns do ultimately come into play. How does a liberal democracy remain both liberal and democratic while opening itself up as a relief valve for illiberal countries and economic/political refugees? I'm still waiting for the book that addresses some of these practical concerns - this isn't it.

Reixel Soy Yo says

This is the kind of book that everybody should read, specially racist people, just to try to think at least a little before saying their stupid and racist comments. Ignorance is a dangerous thing and, unfortunately, there or a lot of ignorant people out there in the world, spreading their ignorance and their lies.

Lipou Laliemthavisay says

I enjoyed reading this book because it addressed many of the prominent misconceptions of immigration. I wished the chapter on taxes was elaborated a little more, but otherwise, I found the book great! It reminded me of my own ignorance toward the immigration topic and how much more I should have researched my thesis.

Ashley says

Very well written and I was with the author 100% of the way. It was great to see all of the arguments and counter-arguments about why immigration is "bad" laid out in one place. The author does a wonderful job of illustrating the inter-connectedness of our ever more globalizing world, and the central role that the US (and other colonial forces) play in causing chain reactions that create what our contradictory politics have labeled "problems" throughout history. I appreciate her dive into race relations and the history of what has been considered "white" and "non-white" throughout US history, and feel that I have a much better understanding now of so many issues beyond that of immigration in the US.

My one problem with this book is actually it's lack of sources/facts. There are many places where notes are made and references to studies etc. However, there are many more places throughout the book where inferences are made without showing concrete evidence to back up her claims. As I said, I agree with everything the author puts forth in this book. However, I think opponents of this point of view will have a field day ripping the writing apart looking for lack of cited evidence. Myth 19, for example, was thoroughly cited, whereas some of the first few chapters talk a lot about the feelings and dreams of these billions of people the ought American history without tying it back to a social study of any sort.

Well written, and almost there! It certainly gives me more ammunition for my arsenal!

Alyssa says

A great, easy to read book that concisely dismantles many myths about immigration. I probably won't retain the specifics, but still a worth-while reminder not to believe everything you hear.

David says

This book identifies some of the common myths and misconceptions about immigration and its history in the U.S. Chomsky tells a number of stories to make it personable while detailing stats and trends. The result is a heartbreaking tale that we would do well to fix.

MichelleCH says

Each chapter takes a look at different myths associated with immigration and uses data to disprove each issue. For example, in the chapter on immigrants taking American jobs, the author does a good job of showing how the job market is really elastic. The job market contrasts and expands - really with the ebb and flow of demand ~ the best point being that in times of population expansion there are more jobs and more consumers to support the economy. The influx of foreign immigrants is really a mechanism to create a stronger economy and does not take jobs from citizens. The book also gives a historical look at immigration and citizenship policy in the US giving insight to the often confusing and nonsensical approach our government has often adapted. Only in the last chapter are there some suggestions made as to how we might rework this complicated system. A good organized read for a complex subject.

Gail says

This is a must read book To understand that there are so many myths that people need to read and understand that they are just that myths.

Mom says

This book was on a reading list for women of our church.

Aviva Chomsky is now @ the top of my prayer list.

I had hoped this book would better explain why we have so many illegal people siphoning our country dry. Instead the introduction sets a negative tone which is held throughout the book.

I am now convinced even more the illegals should be deported, supports stopped for their welfare and sustenance.

The hue and cry about the newest "native-born" children of the illegals just underscores the way the system is broken and the illegals use these children as a means of remaining in the country.

Another example: an illegal will pay hundreds of dollars to a guide to get a trip across the border or smuggled in some other way, why don't they use the same stash f dollars to support their families?

Rob says

Wouldn't be a book by a Chomsky if it didn't do a great job at identifying a real problem and then blamed it on the wrong cause.

Sace says

Eye-opening. Either I slept through US history in high school or they teach a white-washed version (no pun intended...well, maybe so.)

US Policy is a farce no matter who is in office. We were built on the backs of the poor and our government has made sure throughout history that that status quo is maintained. I don't believe it's any different in 2011. Those with everything want to keep it that way and those with a little more than the folks on the bottom don't want to fight to help those below them. I don't think anyone in this country gives a damn about the TRULY invisible and disenfranchised.

This book only solidified my disillusionment.

Beth says

Although the formation of a "well, what comes next?" plan seems to be an after thought in the book, I think the issues brought to light in the book are well researched. This is definitely an important book to read if you want to have intelligent conversations about immigration.

Josh says

As someone admittedly pretty ignorant of the ins and outs of immigration issues, I really got a lot out of this book. It examines immigration into the US as a result of structural factors (globalization, colonialism, neoliberalism) that help to explain a lot of the immigration trends today. Chomsky's account of the evolution of the relationship between race and citizenship in the US is very interesting, as well as the chapter on assimilation into racial hierarchies into the US--and how that negatively affects goals of academic achievement and success for young people. A very disturbing read, but I think a very important one.
