



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

By 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.

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They Take Our Jobs!: And 20 Other Myths about Immigration By Aviva Chomsky Bibliography

- Sales Rank: #81880 in Books
- Published on: 2007-06-01
- Released on: 2007-06-01
- Original language: English
- Number of items: 1
- Dimensions: 8.50" h x .72" w x 5.50" l, .75 pounds
- Binding: Paperback
- 264 pages

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

Drawing on immigration history and left-wing economic analysis, historian and immigrants' rights activist Chomsky (*Profits of Extermination*) aims to debunk the assumptions informing the current immigration debate in this well-researched if stiffly written account. She offers straightforward arguments against anti-immigrant perceptions such as the one in the book's title: the "number of jobs is *not* finite, it is elastic," Chomsky asserts, pointing out that in the "postindustrial economy," many manufacturing jobs have been replaced by low-paying service jobs. In response to the accusation that "immigrants don't pay taxes," Chomsky notes that textile jobs that were once a part of the "formal sector" are now informal (i.e., they do not offer benefits or collect taxes)—for which she blames the employers. As for immigrants' alleged reluctance to learn English, the author observes that as one generation becomes fluent, new Spanish speakers arrive; she defends non-English speakers by citing the waiting lists for ESL classes and explaining that immigrants with a history as a conquered people (e.g. Mexicans) more stubbornly retain their heritage. Though Chomsky presents an agile blend of the history of race and immigration in the U.S. with current events, the book's format of offering liberal polemics to anti-immigrant questions forces her into a defensive, didactic tone. (*July*)

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Review

"An indispensable guide to the current debate on immigration. If you are at all uncertain about how to deal with anti-immigrant arguments, you will find Chomsky's book a perfect response. She makes her points with clarity and uses unassailable evidence while offering constructive short- and long-term solutions.—Howard Zinn, author of *You Can't Be Neutral on a Moving Train*

"You've heard it all before: Immigrants take away jobs from Americans. They drive down wages, don't pay taxes and yet benefit from public services. But as Chomsky demonstrates, these are all myths, if not outright lies. She not only demolishes virtually every myth about immigrants and immigration to the U.S., she offers policymakers and activists solutions for tackling many of the issues created by globalization and an immigration policy grounded in falsehoods, and in so doing destroys the greatest myth of all: that nothing can be done."—Robin D. G. Kelley, author of *Freedom Dreams: The Black Radical Imagination*

"Finally, a concise and comprehensive breakdown of the most prevalent misconceptions about immigration. Avi Chomsky provides not only practical ammunition for the pundit wars, but also real thinking about the intersection of migration and the history of race and rights in the U.S. It's the definitive field guide to today's immigration debate."—Tram Nguyen, executive editor of *Colorlines* magazine and author of *We Are All Suspects Now*

"Avi Chomsky's new book, *They Take Our Jobs!* is a welcome addition to the literature and tools needed to inform the current debate on immigration. In identifying more than 20 "myths" about immigration, the author brings readers through an accessible discussion that includes history, politics, economics and social analysis to challenge these myths and more. At a time when we desperately need to shift the public discourse in the U.S. and elsewhere, to include a more humane and informed perspective on the process of immigration and the lives of migrants and their families, Chomsky's book provides us all with a much-needed sense of history and justice—and injustice—that must be included as we struggle for fair and humane immigration policies."—Catherine Tactaquin, Executive Director, National Network for Immigrant and Refugee Rights

About the Author

Aviva Chomsky is professor of history and coordinator of Latin American Studies at Salem State College. The author of several books, Chomsky has been active in Latin American solidarity and immigrants' rights issues for over twenty-five years. She lives in Salem, Massachusetts.

Users Review

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Donna Gray:

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