

"They Take Our Jobs"

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Politics Makes Strange Bedfellows.

"They take our jobs" and 20 other myths about immigration

by Aviva Chomsky

The wonderful title of this immigration book is revealing and enticing. Its argument and assumptions are also revealing and to me much less enticing.

The technique of starting with the "myths" about immigration, or any topic, and then exposing that the myths are not grounded in facts is a very good way of writing a persuasive book.

The myths that Chomsky chooses to debunk are the ones that are most often heard.

- Immigrants drive down wages
- Immigrants don't pay taxes
- We are being overrun by immigrants
- The US has always welcomed immigrants
- And seventeen more.

Some of the books arguments are very convincingly constructed. She takes the idea "I am not opposed to immigration I'm opposed to illegal immigration." Shows that before 1924 there were no illegal immigrants from Europe because the laws making it illegal hadn't been written yet. She then draws a parallel to the civil right struggle and shows that immigration laws discriminate against brown people. History she concludes will honor people who don't obey discriminatory laws.

Her other methods of debunking the myths however will not convince many of the people who now oppose immigration and immigrants. She often fails to put things in historic or relative perspective. For instance she claims that late 19th century US immigration policy regarding Asians was racist but doesn't use any perspective by comparing it to other settler nations policies. But the most important thing to know about "Twenty Myths" is that Chomsky sees the world through a Marxist lens. She sees the producers as exploiters, the business organizer as evil and the labor organizer as good. Her book is full of assumptions about the evil intents of business. She writes "In many industries, employers seek to reduce costs by employing the poorest most vulnerable people." The same facts could be written: "In many industries, employers seek to reduce costs by hiring new workers at low wages so that they can offer their customers the low cost goods they demand."

Chomsky writes in her conclusion that "High levels of migration are a symptom of a global system that privileges the few at the expense of the many." Would be more accurate if written. For the many high levels of migration are a solution to a global system that privileges the few. Because if migration is allowed people to vote with their feet and go to the places where they feel they can maximize their opportunities.

At the same time that I agreed with Chomsky's conclusions I was steaming mad at many of her arguments and interpretations. "They take our Jobs" is a worthwhile read because it presents the arguments from the left in favor of a more humane immigration policy cogently and concisely.