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# Review of Immigration Nation: Raids, Detentions, Deportations in Post- 9/11 America by Tanya Maria Golash-Boza

Nathaniel A. Davis  
*Southern Illinois University*

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***Book Review***  
**Immigration Nation: Raids, Detentions,  
Deportations in Post-9/11 America**  
**By**  
**Tanya Maria Golash-Boza**

**Nathaniel A. Davis**  
Southern Illinois University

Paradigm Publishers, 2012, 224 Pp

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The central theme of this book is that the United States enforcement of punitive immigration policies violates human rights. While paying lip service to the concept of universal human rights, Tanya Maria Golash-Boza argues that United States immigration policy and enforcement procedures contradict the nation's self-expressed national ideals, ignore international treaty obligations, harm communities, and infringe upon the social, economic, and cultural rights of citizens and non-citizens (2-5, 111). It has done so by ignoring or devaluing the right to family unity. Not only is family unity the cornerstone of social life, Golash-Boza contends, it is an inalienable human right (5). The author seeks to introduce readers to immigration policy, enforcement agencies practices, and their consequences, in the post-9/11 United States. While doing so, she argues passionately for amnesty, overhaul of entry policy, and the inclusion of individual mobility in international human rights doctrine (171).

*Immigration Nation* accomplishes the task of familiarizing readers with US immigration policy and enforcement, and the accessible language and structure of the book suit it for classroom use. The compelling anecdotes accentuate the suffering of illegal migrants whose only crime is that of living and working in the United States without authorization. They are not dangerous terrorists, yet post-9/11 immigration policy enforcement makes them the primary (albeit perhaps unintended) targets. Golash-Boza asserts that these migrants and their loved ones possess an inalienable human right to family

~313~

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unity by virtue of their humanity (5). The topically arranged chapters underscore how this freedom—as well as many civil rights—has often been denied in the name of national security.

Chapter 1 provides a brief background of the reasons behind immigration to the United States alongside a brief legal history of immigration law from the 1882 Chinese Exclusion Act to the controversial Arizona law now making its way through the judicial review process (33-43). Chapters 2, 3, and 4 review the post-9/11 immigration policy enforcement mechanisms, procedures, and their human costs, maintaining focus on the offenses against human as well as civil rights. The author stresses “the right to territorial belonging” of the U.S. citizen family members of illegal residents, maintaining that this right is devalued when citizen children leave the country with deported parents, or when citizen spouses must choose whether to accompany their deported partners or remain in the United States (6, 111, 113-135).

Golash-Boza’s work heightens awareness of the plight of undocumented workers in the United States. She identifies numerous civil rights violations in worksite and home raids as well as the detention system (47-77). Michigan’s requirement of social security numbers for the issuance of marriage licenses denies illegal migrants living there the right to marry (126). The book highlights how the enforcement apparatus intended to protect the United States from terrorism has increasingly targeted peaceful, law-abiding (aside from violations of immigration law) aspiring citizens. The heart-wrenching personal stories in these chapters (particularly chapter 4) comprise the most powerful and compelling portion of the book. The accounts citizen and non-citizen couples and families highlight the fear and suffering inflicted by the present system.

Golash-Boza argues in the last chapter that the existence of an “immigration industrial complex” is the driving force behind the United States’ harsh immigration policies (142-158). She highlights the profit potential of immigration law enforcement, stresses media coverage of local violent crime in the quest to attract viewers, and emphasizes the political use of ‘othering’ to justify increased defense spending (*ibid*). However, she does not offer specific examples of how either the prison/immigration complex or the chief migrant-labor industries (such as meatpacking and garment factories)

~314~

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have influenced the policies from which they profit, focusing instead on the superheated rhetoric of right-wing television shows *The O'Reilly Factor*, *Lou Dobbs Tonight*, and *Glenn Beck*—contributing to an anti-immigrant political climate—and the lack of immigration reform legislation (142-149). Yet as she observes in chapter 2, the creation of the Department of Homeland Security in 2002 dramatically amplified the funding and capacity for enforcement of existing immigration laws (40-41). The “immigration industrial complex,” as the author describes it, might suggest a more unfortunate accident than intelligent design.

In addition, the author's fierce criticism of United States immigration and citizenship policies ought to be tempered by comparison with those of other countries, especially given her explicit claim that “unlike most other nations, [the United States] does not give much weight to the social, economic, and cultural rights that are also important to the human rights tradition” (2). A cursory review of the citizenship and immigration policies as well as enforcement mechanisms of other nations (Germany and Mexico, perhaps) might suggest that the United States is not the only offender against the human or civil rights of migrants (legal or otherwise), and may not be the most heinous perpetrator.

For analytical clarity, more precise differentiation between political, citizenship, and human rights would be helpful, especially since all three overlap within the book's narrative. Combined with more history of how these rights have been interpreted in U.S. and international courts, a tighter analytical framework would strengthen the argument and make the book more instructive to readers and more useful to scholars. The lack of precision occasionally leads to confusion. For example, Golash-Boza asserts, “the rights awarded by U.S. citizenship are few: the right to live in this country and the right to vote” (111). This contention is difficult to reconcile with either her presumed human rights perspective or that of political rights. It is all the more puzzling given her repeated observance of the ICE's violation of Fourth Amendment rights (protection against unreasonable search and seizure) during home raids, as well (49).

Despite these shortcomings, *Immigration Nation* marks a significant attempt to examine the unintended social costs of the War on Terror. It accomplishes the goal of introducing readers to the

~315~

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topic of U.S. immigration policy, while simultaneously making a case for amnesty and the individual mobility as a universal human right, hinting at the necessity of open borders (171). Noting the failures of United States immigration policy, Golash-Boza draws attention to the fact that not only is the system still broken, but from a human rights standpoint, it continues to get worse.

~316~

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