



The Criminalization of Immigration: Contexts and Consequences

Alissa Ackerman, Rich Furman

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Immigration has become an increasingly popular topic often leading to passionate and powerful debate. The visceral emotions that stem from such debates transcend fact and pave the way for value conflicts over what it means to be an American. For most of our history, one of our most important narratives has been that we are a country that was built by and for immigrants. Indeed, the inscription on the Statue of Liberty reads, in part, "Give me your tired, your poor, your huddled masses yearning to breathe free." For many generations we welcomed new generations of immigrants who added new levels of richness and possibility to our nation. This certainly influenced U.S. policy on the handling of immigrants, refugees, and asylum seekers. Yet, at the same time, a coexisting argument threatened this discourse. In this story, America is a country for Americans, and is threatened by "others". While this part of the story is certainly not new, it has resurfaced in the wake of September 11th and, even more recently, has become a political tool utilized to serve the interests of those in power.

The Criminalization of Immigration: Contexts and Consequences explores these competing narratives and the consequences of criminalizing immigration in the United States and abroad. It examines the impact of national, state, and local legislation on the psychosocial well being of immigrants. The book explores key ways in which immigration is criminalized, and examines how the problematization of immigration becomes a political tool.

Overall, this book provides a complete examination of an issue that cuts through emotional value conflicts. It provides the facts and knowledge essential for a fair and balanced debate.

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