

Reform without Justice: Latino Migrant Politics and the Homeland Security State**By Alfonso Gonzales, 2013****New York: Oxford University Press, 240 pages****Kathleen R. Arnold**

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Today, the dominant rhetoric about migration to the United States takes as self-evident notions such as a broken immigration system, no pathway to citizenship, and concerns about “illegals.” In turn, these problematic categories rest on binaries of deserving and undeserving, racial hierarchies intersecting with sexism and class-bias, and the denial of linkages to sending countries. Alfonso Gonzales’ recent book, *Reform without Justice: Latino Migrant Politics and the Homeland Security State*, is an immensely important and informative book that investigates how these claims have come to dominate common sense understandings of contemporary migration and what each of these notions justifies and masks. The sum of Gonzales’ arguments suggest that the system does not seem broken so much as purposefully creating public fears about criminal-immigrants, whose criminality is not determined by crime so much as by racial, gender, and economic class statuses. While it may be true that attaining citizenship is difficult, Gonzales demonstrates that current proposals from expanded DACA (Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals) and the provisions of the various proposals for CIR (Comprehensive Immigration Reform) mostly keep immigrants in a legal limbo, ensuring that there is a supply of low-wage labor that can be disposed of while a few who are privileged or lucky will be able to naturalize. The goal is a guest-worker system, with all of its attendant abuses and exploitation, rather than a stable political status. Related to these issues, the term “illegal” tells us more about the laws and societal attitudes about immigrants than it does about the immigrants themselves. The term connotes racial hierarchies, class biases, and gendered subjectivities often arbitrarily applied to Latin@s as a monolithic whole.

Gonzales’ approach is Gramscian and thus he does not just investigate current immigration policies but the role of civil society actors, the media, and politician-pundits in terms of the current perception that there is an immigration crisis as well as middle-of-the-road reformers and more progressive (i.e. radical) activists. Of course, the role of the state is important in shaping the legal status of immigrants, and Gonzales goes beyond most immigration analyses’ frameworks by investigating the dynamics of neoliberal policies and trade agreements between the United States and Central America as well as the United States’ continued military presence and influence in this area. Gonzales does not merely assert the links that are formed with military and economic relationships but investigates certain examples in-depth, particularly regarding SouthCom and its continued influence in Central America after the 1980s. In particular, he establishes “the consolidation of an emergent transnational system of migration control between the United States and El Salvador” (p. 106). A parallel trajectory to this transnational power dynamic is accounting for the plight of deportees when they reach their home countries and are often stigmatized at best and brutally beaten or jailed at worst. While some authors like Daniel Kanstroom provide a legal analysis of detention and deportation, Gonzales provides one of the best accounts I have read regarding the meaning of deportation to repressive countries in Central America, including first-hand experiences related to him by interviewees. He illustrates how deportation is not the terminus of legal proceedings but the beginning of social stigma, economic exclusion, and the possibility of torture, detention in one’s own country, or death. In effect, Gonzales wants to remind us that much of our immigration policy is interconnected with foreign policy, policy in other countries, and neoliberal economic arrangements.

Interwoven into all of these accounts are stories from the sixty individuals he interviewed for this book. Because he is drawing on several methodologies, Gonzales’ book is necessarily transdisciplinary. However, this is also necessary to be able to address the complex workings of today’s policies, laws, and attitudes towards migrants in addition to examining the transnational bases of migration flows to the United States. This book could be framed as an important contribution to Latin@ studies, political theory, and related disciplines in three different ways. First, Gonzales goes beyond much of the Latin@ studies literature to not merely study formal politics and statistics related to key institutions but also to analyze the roots of current power dynamics within formal and informal politics. Drawing on a unique interpretation of Antonio Gramsci that emphasizes the role of consent to authoritarian politics, even among the left, Gonzales thus explains the structural roots

of today's institutional behaviors. The notion of “consensual domination” is a particularly important aspect of this, suggesting the complicity of the majority of people to authoritarian and undemocratic practices in migration policy. A second view of this book is that it provides an intellectual history of civil society actors who sought to defeat the Sensenbrenner Bill and to support different, less problematic versions of comprehensive immigration reform or to pursue more radical ends. In constructing this history, Gonzales' book is a valuable account of specific groups, important actors, and various debates and divisions within these groups. In this way, he explores civil society groups in far more depth than many authors and also provides important insight into how and why some of these groups and their members became co-opted by the Obama Administration. This is significant to establish a contemporary intellectual history of Latin@ leaders as experiencing a specific and contingent form of racism and discrimination based on alienage that cannot be reduced to or subsumed under the experiences of other racial minorities.

This book can also be viewed as an important intervention in the social protest literature, examining the various facets of groups and individuals (particularly unaffiliated youth) who supported the “mega-marches” of 2006 and 2007 as well as the Great Boycott. While Gonzales provides unique insight into the role of these different groups, he also discusses why their current efforts have either been neutralized or have failed: they lack long-term vision. In any of these interpretations, it is evident that his investigations—of why and how the mega-marches occurred, led to defeat of the Sensenbrenner Bill, and yet later fizzled out—expose the degree to which some individuals were often cooperating with the state authority they sought to challenge. To recuperate the radical and more deeply democratic vision of activists, Gonzales urges Latin@ leaders to formulate a long-term political plan that does not compromise with or consent to the current authoritarian power dynamics governing migration policy at this time. The book could be faulted for not drawing on a more intersectional approach (race and masculinity are the dominant frames), but it is such a valuable resource in terms of deep policy analysis, social movements history, and examining Latin@ activism in its own terms, that what Gonzales doesn't do matters less than what he does do. In the end, Gonzales' book is a well-researched, valuable book that will foster dialogue and help us learn how to create a more democratic future.