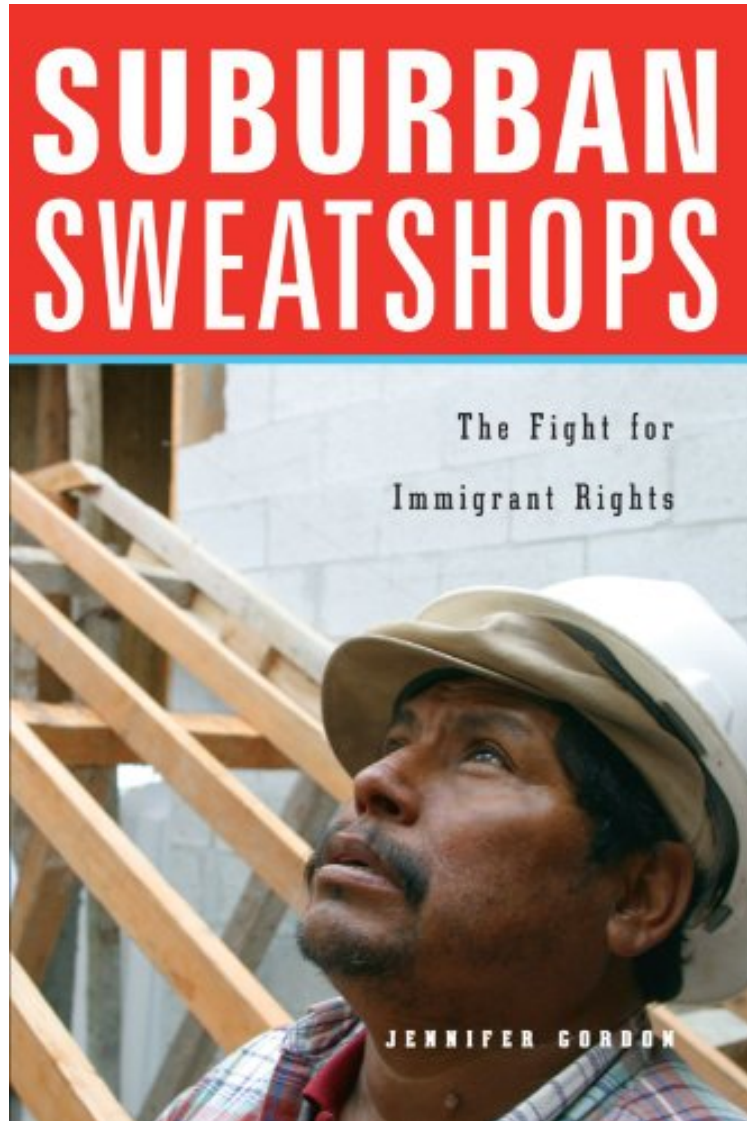


[Download pdf] Suburban Sweatshops: The Fight for Immigrant Rights

Suburban Sweatshops: The Fight for Immigrant Rights

Jennifer Gordon

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Jennifer Gordon : Suburban Sweatshops: The Fight for Immigrant Rights before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Suburban Sweatshops: The Fight for Immigrant Rights:

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. I would highly recommend it. By Jacqueline Hayes Very important book, I would highly recommend it. 8 of 9 people found the following review helpful. A Call to Action By An Avid Reader This book is many things - a history of immigration, a story of politics, and a study of law, public policy and activism. Above all, it is a call to action - an inspirational, educational guide to effecting social change. Suburban

Sweatshops illustrates the enormous impact of one person's efforts to aid a disadvantaged and largely unnoticed segment of American society - immigrant workers - not by fighting for them, but by organizing and empowering them to fight for themselves. As Gordon recounts the events preceding the Workplace Project, and leading to its inception, she acknowledges the horror of the relatively few well-publicized atrocities against immigrant workers. Yet such incidents of "super-exploitation," Gordon submits, are only the most graphic illustrations of an infinitely more obscure problem - a web of appalling injustices so frequent as to seem an almost inevitable aspect of immigrant workers' lives. Gordon reveals these injustices in a variety of ways, supplementing examples of particular immigrants' living and working conditions with statistics that emphasize the pervasiveness of such situations. Most compelling, however, are Gordon's gripping portrayals of immigrants' personal stories. In her direct and elegant style, Gordon introduces the reader to a series of individuals whose experiences, though poignant, are studies in strength, courage and ambition. Many of these anecdotes are the result of Gordon's personal involvement in, and exposure to, the lives of her subjects. Her sympathy and respect for the people whose lives she documents are evident, as are her high expectations of them. Gordon describes the development of the Workplace Project in equally balanced terms. Her pride in the enormous success of the project is apparent, and well-deserved. Throughout the book, however, she offers a candid assessment of its challenges and limitations. This book is truly essential reading for students and professionals in the fields of law, sociology, government and history. It will serve as an indispensable reference to anyone seeking to enact social and political change. It will serve as an inspiration to anyone who reads it.

9 of 11 people found the following review helpful. Breaking new GroundBy tortugaWhile I understand another reviewer's complaint about the book not being national in scope, and not telling us a lot about the daily lives of immigrants. But the discussion of legal and organizing strategy is far from arcane or dry. This is really a story about the ongoing process of democratization in our country--which the book makes clear is far from complete (something it would be useful for President Bush and other global democratizers to remember). The book provides a very insightful and thorough examination of how workers in the so called informal and underground economies learn about, use, and deepen their rights in the United States. It also makes a compelling material and moral case for why they deserve those rights. Heartwarming personal stories are nice, but this book expanded my own understanding of the politics of globalization at the micro level. It would make a great case study for college teachers to use with undergrads because it combines an immediate issue with theoretical and philosophical substance.

Jorge Bonilla is hospitalized with pneumonia from sleeping at the restaurant where he works, unable to afford rent on wages of thirty cents an hour. Domestic worker Yanira Juarez discovers she has labored for six months with no wages at all; her employer lied about establishing a savings account for her. We live in an era of the sweatshop reborn. In 1992 Jennifer Gordon founded the Workplace Project to help immigrant workers in the underground suburban economy of Long Island, New York. In a story of gritty determination and surprising hope, she weaves together Latino immigrant life and legal activism to tell the unexpected tale of how the most vulnerable workers in society came together to demand fair wages, safe working conditions, and respect from employers. Immigrant workers--many undocumented--won a series of remarkable victories, including a raise of thirty percent for day laborers and a domestic workers' bill of rights. In the process, they transformed themselves into effective political participants. Gordon neither ignores the obstacles faced by such grassroots organizations nor underestimates their very real potential for fundamental change. This revelatory work challenges widely held beliefs about the powerlessness of immigrant workers, what a union should be, and what constitutes effective lawyering. It opens up exciting new possibilities for labor organizing, community building, participatory democracy, legal strategies, and social justice.

From Publishers WeeklyIn this compelling book, Gordon combines the harrowing stories of individuals with a broad perspective on suburban economics to create a vivid analysis of immigrant labor in America. An associate professor at Fordham's law school, Gordon begins by pointing out the recent shift of immigrant labor from the cities to the 'bedroom communities' of the nation. "Low-wage immigrant work in the suburbs is no kinder than immigrant work in cities," she writes. "In its long hours, illegally low wages, and staggering rates of injury, it is sweatshop labor all the same." Most of the book's examples come from Gordon's work with the Workplace Project in Long Island, New York, an organization that she formed in 1992 to help immigrants assert their rights on the job and organize collective action. She uses an account of the Project's history as a way into her broader examination of the pros and cons of unions, the problems of organizing workers and the legal aspects of immigrant rights. The technique works quite successfully, giving readers a vivid sense of these workers' conditions in restaurants, construction sites and residential homes while imparting useful lessons on activism. Gordon is understandably proud of the Project's accomplishments--such as getting a bill passed that increased, by 800%, the penalty for employers who did not pay workers in full--but she does not shirk away from the group's problems, like the difficulty of enforcing long-term workplace changes. Her unflinching study raises questions about the future of immigrant rights and the causes behind the "disturbing renaissance of sweatshop work." Copyright Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. A genuinely outstanding book. There is no better account of the dilemmas and potentialities of organizing

and lawyering on behalf of poor immigrant workers in today's America. Many people extol 'participatory democracy' and call for building labor and community organizations from the bottom up. But we have few richly detailed descriptions about the actual creation and operation of such an organization, fewer still by a brilliantly reflective participant observer, and none by an author with Gordon's gifts as storyteller and analyst. Brimming with both practical and theoretical insights, *Suburban Sweatshops* will be widely read. (William E. Forbath, University of Texas Law School)

Suburban Sweatshops tackles a tough and timely topic, offers a fascinating narrative, and, most impressive, combines memoir, organizational case study, and a broad analysis of current trends in labor organizing to make a compelling case for how to do things differently. Readers will be drawn to the book for its focus on two issues of broad public concern: the place of recent immigrants in America's workforce and the prospects for a renewed labor movement. Powerfully argued and engagingly written, this is a real contribution. (Francesca Polletta, Columbia University)

This is a superb book. Gordon is self-critical without being defeatist or cynical, optimistic without being unrealistic or self-deceiving. She combines story and theory in a seamless web. And she writes beautifully. (Richard Abel, UCLA School of Law)

An inspirational book, *Suburban Sweatshops* exposes the hidden underbelly of immigrant life in modern-day America, but nonetheless leaves one with a sense of hope. Gordon's passion for her work shines through on these pages, making it a must read for anyone laboring on the side of justice. (Anthony D. Romero, Executive Director, American Civil Liberties Union)

Suburban Sweatshops is a case study in what happens when courage and solidarity come up against against greed and indifference. I came away from it with great respect, not only for the sweatshop workers whose story it is, but for Jennifer Gordon, who emerges as a brilliant and admirably modest role model for young professionals with a conscience. (Barbara Ehrenreich, author of *Nickel and Dimed: On (Not) Getting By in America*)

Jennifer Gordon's *Suburban Sweatshops* is a beautifully written, uplifting story where good--in the form of resourceful and creative advocacy involving thousands of immigrants--occasionally triumphs over the evils of a grim underground economy. In lucid prose, Gordon shows how immigrant workers courageously fought to build paths to democracy. At the same time, she offers intriguing new approaches for lawyers and organizers in the struggle for social justice. (Lani Guinier, co-author of *The Miner's Canary: Enlisting Race, Resisting Power, Transforming Democracy*)

In this compelling book, Gordon combines the harrowing stories of individuals with a broad perspective on suburban economics to create a vivid analysis of immigrant labor in America...Her unflinching study raises questions about the future of immigrant rights and the causes behind the 'disturbing renaissance of sweatshop work.' (Publishers Weekly 2005-02-14)

[An] important new book...*Suburban Sweatshops* is a self-reflective insider's account of Gordon's efforts--and of how difficult marrying law and organizing proved to be. (Scott Cummings and Ingrid Eagly *Legal Affairs* 2005-03-01)

[Gordon's] book is a sobering, informative, and inspiring look at the achievements of the Workplace Project, a Long Island workers' center that is one of the many organizations devoted to organizing poor workers around the United States. (Virginia Harabin *International Socialist*)

Gordon presents an enlightening, uplifting book that can also serve as a manual for immigrant rights activists. In an inspired use of "sweatshop" as metaphor for suburban employers of undocumented immigrant workers who, like their manufacturing counterparts, flagrantly violate minimum wage, health, and safety standards, Gordon calls attention to the plight of the millions of undocumented workers. (E. Hu-DeHart *Choice* 2005-05-01)

The author tells a detailed story of her involvement in the Workplace Project and the struggle to get the Republican-controlled New York state legislature and Republican Governor to pass the Unpaid Wages Prohibition Act in 1997...This is an important book in many ways. It provides a highly personal perspective on the issue of exploitation of foreign-born low-wage service workers in the United States. At the same time, because the author is not a foreign-born low-wage service worker, she is able to maintain an appropriate detachment to produce an insightful and rich discourse. (Sharon M. Lee *Ethnic and Racial Studies*)

A genuinely outstanding book. There is no better account of the dilemmas and potentialities of organizing and lawyering on behalf of poor immigrant workers in today's America. Many people extol 'participatory democracy' and call for building labor and community organizations from the bottom up. But we have few richly detailed descriptions about the actual creation and operation of such an organization, fewer still by a brilliantly reflective participant observer, and none by an author with Gordon's gifts as storyteller and analyst. Brimming with both practical and theoretical insights, *Suburban Sweatshops* will be widely read. (William E. Forbath, University of Texas Law School)