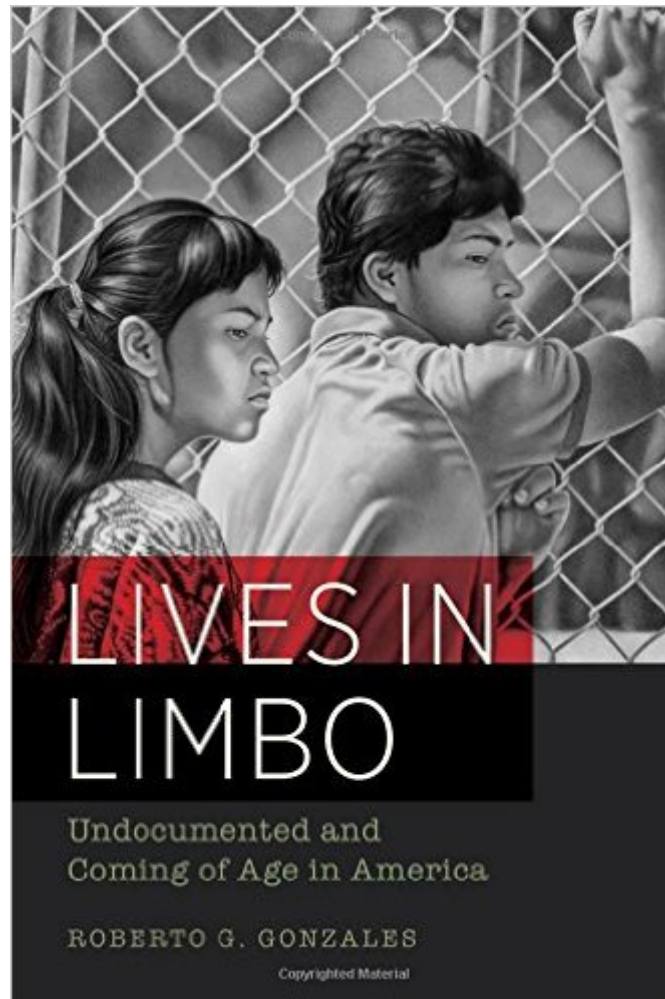


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Lives In Limbo: Undocumented And Coming Of Age In America



Synopsis

“My world seems upside down. I have grown up but I feel like I’m moving backward. And I can’t do anything about it.” —Esperanza Over two million of the nation’s eleven million undocumented immigrants have lived in the United States since childhood. Due to a broken immigration system, they grow up to uncertain futures. In *Lives in Limbo*, Roberto G. Gonzales introduces us to two groups: the college-goers, like Ricardo, who had good grades and a strong network of community support that propelled him to college and DREAM Act organizing but still landed in a factory job a few short years after graduation, and the early-exiters, like Gabriel, who failed to make meaningful connections in high school and started navigating dead-end jobs, immigration checkpoints, and a world narrowly circumscribed by legal limitations. This vivid ethnography explores why highly educated undocumented youth share similar work and life outcomes with their less-educated peers, despite the fact that higher education is touted as the path to integration and success in America. Mining the results of an extraordinary twelve-year study that followed 150 undocumented young adults in Los Angeles, *Lives in Limbo* exposes the failures of a system that integrates children into K-12 schools but ultimately denies them the rewards of their labor.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Roberto Gonzales’ *LIVES IN LIMBO* offers an unprecedented long-term examination of what it has been like for undocumented youth to grow up in America at the turn of the 21st century. Through

extensive interviews and fieldwork with 150 Mexican youth over the course of 12 years, Gonzales traces with compelling detail how the lack of lawful status profoundly shapes young persons' possibilities for development and limits their life opportunities as adults. Both academics and non-academics will find this book to be tremendously informative. Each chapter is rich in themes, questions, contexts, and descriptions of the challenges faced by undocumented youth at different stages of their development. As a reader one is effectively transported into the continually shifting worlds of these young persons' "worlds that come into being and gain shape through common engagements with peers, family members, mentors, co-workers, counselors, legal agents and others who hold various understandings of illegality." • To the extent that these social exchanges systematically determine the life trajectories of undocumented youth, Gonzales effectively demonstrates how "migrant illegality" (a concept coined by Nicholas De Genova) is a profoundly social process and not merely a legal status imposed unilaterally by the law. Gonzales goes beyond socio-legal analyses however. In describing undocumented youth's changing understandings of themselves, others, and the world at large, he documents how the lack of status influences youth's possibilities for experience and shapes their modes of thinking, emoting, and relating to others. Accordingly, his work offers important psychosocial insights relevant to anyone interested in the psychological impact of undocumented status.

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