

BOOK REVIEWS

Mobilizing Against Inequality: Unions, Immigrant Workers, and the Crisis of Capitalism

Lee H. Adler, Maite Tapia, Lowell Turner, Ithaca, New York
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Reviewed by SHAWN SICKLER, Arizona State University, United States

In a time of growing inequality and shrinking unions, it is important that we learn how we got to this point and what we can do from here. Lee Adler, Maite Tapia, and Lowell Turner's edited volume *Mobilizing Against Inequality, Unions, Immigrant Workers, and the Crisis of Capitalism* helps us address these questions. This book provides concrete evidence to demonstrate the connection between declined union participation, and increased income inequality due to wage stagnation. It argues that we must reverse these trends if we are to improve the current condition. This means we need to start including previously excluded groups, such as immigrants, and break down old barriers of race, class, and gender. The authors provide us a cross national and industrial analysis of immigrant worker movements and union organization in industrial nations, including Germany, France, the United Kingdom, and the United States. The cross cultural analysis helps us to understand and learn from the successes and failures of the union and social movements in various nations, while shedding light on common trends and the potential for international engagement. This is important because of the growing globalization of labor.

The book is broken down into three parts. The third and final part of the book talks about key findings, policy implications, and possible directions for the future. Some of the key findings are that: (1) traditional union strategies of restriction and neglect of immigrant workers are no longer sustainable,

(2) attitudes in the United States, United Kingdom, France, and Germany have changed significantly over the last two decades, and (3) unions face challenges to include immigrant workers in labor movements seeking revitalization.

The first two chapters discuss unions and the mobilization of immigrant workers. They provide context for deeper discussion. These chapters discuss how unregulated capitalism has created a long term wage stagnation and financial deregulation resulting in an upward redistribution of wealth. Although capitalism adverts crises with temporary solutions such as inflation and debt, this economic system has proved to be unstable.

In the times of instability there is usually a backlash on immigrants, many citizens claiming they are taking their jobs. The challenge is getting unions to see the immigrants as low wage workers, who also deserve union protection, just like them. Low wage workers are those who earn two thirds of the median income, this makes up about 22.1% of the workforce. By forming class consciousness and acting together, the unions would see an increase in membership and influence.

The second part of the book, chapters three through seven, provides cross-national data and analysis. These chapters are all organized in the same manner. The authors start with a historical context which is important because

they also provide the framework for understanding contemporary data and analysis that follow. Then the authors move on to explain current union strategies. They also highlight several key campaigns throughout the four countries such as the Los Angeles CLEAN Car Wash Campaign and the Nashville Taxi Cab Driver campaign in the United States. Both of these movements had gained the support of trade unions and non-profit organizations to raise awareness for a living wage, safe working conditions, safer neighborhoods, and the right to unionize. Some campaigns in the book may seem like small victories but they signify the change of the labor movements to incorporate the immigrant workers. The unions across all four countries deployed different strategies, some of which are of direct contact between union leaders, members, and immigrant workers, with an openness to experimentation and a willingness to risk failure. Campaigning for policy changes is most successful with collaboration with community organizations, and offering educational and legal advice to immigrant workers. Finally the authors leave us with ideas for further development, to confront the distaste for unions young adults have, gain their trust, and hopefully membership, that low wage unions should collaborate with professional unions, and to intervene in moments of civil unrest. The foreign born population in all four countries is on the rise, while organizing immigrant workers is the key issue.

Starting with the U.S. the authors investigate the American Federation of Labor and Congress of Industrial Organizations (AFL-CIO), a nation-wide organization of unions, and the reversal of its policy to start to support immigrants after a long history of practicing exclusion. Mexico is where most of the foreign born population in the United States come from accounting for about 55% or 11.7 million people; although there is a large rising population of Muslim immigrants, with three million coming in the 1990's. This is represented by the key campaigns they talk about in the book, two of them being the Los Angeles CLEAN Car Wash Campaign and the

Nashville Taxi Cab Driver campaign. The United Kingdom also has an umbrella organization for unions, much like the AFL-CIO, called the Trade Union Congress (TUC). Most of the immigrant workers in the United Kingdom come from Poland. A key campaign in the United Kingdom was the Justice for Cleaners campaign, where unions worked with community groups to help cleaners earn a living wage. The lesson learned in the United Kingdom being that, organizing migrant workers is an opportunity to go beyond the workplace and engage civil society.

In France, the primary view of immigrants in the workplace is assimilation and exclusion, to become like them in culture and language or they are not welcome; although unions are pushing for attitudes of acceptance and integration, they don't have to change themselves and they are welcomed to stay. Although the European Union has free worker mobility, that does not mean that immigrants have workers' rights. The Sans Papiers (without papers) campaign had six thousand protesters, at one point, for living wages, good working conditions, and to get legal documents. Strides have been made in France, but the fragmentation of unions along with the government and employers presenting many obstacles have slowed down progress. Germany has the most foreign born people of any country in the European Union. Integration of immigrants into political and social spheres is limited. Key campaigns have focused on social and political integration such as in the Kiel region where many immigrants are of Turkish origin. In addition, only a small portion of immigrants reach leadership position in the unions representing a lack of migrant integration across all spheres of society.

As the authors have shown, unions in multiple industrial nations are beginning to mobilize against growing inequality, integrating immigrant workers into their policies and movements. Mobilizing immigrant workers is mobilizing against inequality. The book argues that so many low wage jobs are unprotected by unions, and immigrants unprotected by countries, that we need to make a change.

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The biggest weakness of this book is the lack of a theoretical framework. It offers no theories behind why our society has ended up this way, and it also offers no theories that tie into their future solutions. This book would not be helpful for people looking at union organizing and immigration from a theoretical standpoint. The book also offers a general overview of the issues at hand, and not an in depth analysis of any issue, fact that can be seen as a strength or a weakness, depending on the intended use of the book. There are many strong points in this book, the first being that it gathers many experts on the subject, to include: Lee H. Adler, Gabriella Alberti, Daniel B. Cornfield, Michael Fichter, Janice Fine, Jane Holgate, Denisse Roca-Servat, Maite Tapia, and Lowell Turner, to create cross country evaluations of immigrant workers, unions, and movements with data to support their arguments. The chapters are well structured and easy to follow. The book leaves us with strategies and thoughts about the future implications. This book also makes the reader aware of many union and civil rights organizations in the United States and the European Union. This is a great book for anyone studying labor rights and movements or just for someone looking to deepen his knowledge, and it can be used in the future as a reference tool.

