

# UC Merced

## UC Merced Previously Published Works

### Title

The Immigration Industrial Complex: Why We Enforce Immigration Policies Destined to Fail

### Permalink

<https://escholarship.org/uc/item/9km0k1tn>

### Journal

Sociology Compass, 3(2)

### ISSN

1751-9020

### Author

Golash-Boza, Tanya

### Publication Date

2009-03-01

### DOI

10.1111/j.1751-9020.2008.00193.x

Peer reviewed



# The Immigration Industrial Complex: Why We Enforce Immigration Policies Destined to Fail

Tanya Golash-Boza\*

*University of Kansas*

---

## Abstract

This article provides a genealogy of the idea of an immigration industrial complex. The immigration industrial complex is the confluence of public and private sector interests in the criminalization of undocumented migration, immigration law enforcement, and the promotion of ‘anti-illegal’ rhetoric. This concept is based on ideas developed with regard to the prison and military industrial complexes. These three complexes share three major features: (a) a rhetoric of fear; (b) the convergence of powerful interests; and (c) a discourse of other-ization. This article explores why Congress has not passed viable legislation to deal with undocumented migration, and instead has passed laws destined to fail, and has appropriated billions of dollars to the Department of Homeland Security to implement these laws. This has been exacerbated in the context of the War on Terror, now that national security has been conflated with immigration law enforcement. This is the first in a two-part series on the immigration industrial complex.

---

## Introduction

There are currently over 12 million people in the United States who do not have authorization from the government to be here (Hoefler et al. 2008; Passel 2006). These people, referred to as undocumented immigrants or illegal aliens, live, work, and study in the United States; yet, most have no prospects for legalization under current laws. They are confined to living in the shadows and remain ineligible for citizenship in the land they have made their home. Most immigration experts agree that the presence of a large undocumented population poses many challenges to our society, and policy experts on the right and the left have offered a variety of viable solutions. Despite widespread recognition that this problem exists, and a plethora of solutions to choose from, the US Congress has not passed any viable legislation to deal with the issue of undocumented migration. Instead, the House of Representatives continues to appropriate billions of dollars to enforce the detrimental laws passed in 1986 and 1996. Moreover, these massive government expenditures have not led to a reduction in the undocumented population in the United States.

This legislative inertia combined with bureaucratic momentum is due to a confluence of interests in the marginalization of undocumented migrants that I call the ‘immigration industrial complex’ (Fernandes 2007; Koulish 2007). The immigration industrial complex refers to the public and private sector interests in the criminalization of undocumented migration, immigration law enforcement and the promotion of ‘anti-illegal’ rhetoric. This concept is based on the idea that there exists a convergence of interests that drives the US government to pass and then avidly enforce a set of immigration policies that have consistently failed to achieve their stated goals and have violated the human rights of migrants and their families in the process.

A variety of legal scholars, historians, and journalists have devoted their attention to the profit potential of immigration law enforcement. This body of work points to the great profits to be made from the current enforcement regime and to the dubious connections between fighting terrorism and arresting undocumented immigrants. Brendan I. Koerner, for example, wrote in *Mother Jones* in 2002: ‘Because federal expenditures on homeland security are projected to rise dramatically in the coming years – and because every aspect of civilian life, from food distribution to public transit, could be affected – a wide range of industries ultimately stands to benefit.’ Deepa Fernandes (2007) argues that ‘enforcing immigration policy has become the latest way to make a quick buck’ (169). Robert Koulish (2007) contends that ‘catching aliens is a lucrative business made all the more so by exploiting already blurred distinctions between immigration and national security.’ Justin Akers Chacón and Mike Davis (2006) argue that ‘border enforcement has become a profitable enterprise’ and that ‘this unprecedented investment in border enforcement has spawned the term ‘border-industrial complex’ to denote the changing nature of immigration enforcement’ (Akers Chacón and Davis 2006, 222–223). In this essay, I expand on their work by engaging more fully with the literature on the military-industrial complex and the prison-industrial complex in order to develop a framework for understanding who benefits from immigration law enforcement.

### **Why are there 12 million undocumented migrants in the United States?**

Before moving forward with this idea of an ‘immigration-industrial complex’, it will be useful to spend some time discussing why we have such a large undocumented population in the first place. The presence of undocumented people in the United States today is in large part due to laws passed in 1965, 1986, and 1996, as well as our relations with major migrant-sending countries. While there is not the space here for a detailed analysis of all of these factors, I will briefly explain our relations with migrant-sending nations and the importance of these laws.

In 2006, the top ten countries from which undocumented immigrants hailed were Mexico (6.6 million), El Salvador (510,000), Guatemala (430,000), the Philippines (280,000), Honduras (280,000), India (270,000), Korea (250,000), Brazil (210,000), China (190,000), and Vietnam (160,000), representing 79 percent of all undocumented immigrants (Hoefer et al. 2007). Each of these ten countries has strong historical ties to the United States, in terms of long-term labor recruitment, direct foreign investment and trading relations, and US military involvement (see Sassen 1989 for a discussion of this). People come to the United States from these countries because of the structural relations between their country and the United States, and the social networks that long-term migration builds (Massey et al. 2002). They often come illegally because our laws are misaligned with the reality of migrant flows and labor needs.

The case of Mexico is a prime example. About half of undocumented immigrants hail from Mexico. Prior to 1965, there had been no numerical limits on the number of immigrants that could be admitted to the United States from any country in the Western Hemisphere. However, the 1965 Hart-Cellar Act established a ceiling of 120,000 immigrant visas for the Western Hemisphere. In 1976, a quota of 20,000 immigrants per year was extended to each individual country in the Western Hemisphere (Joppke 1998). The imposition of a quota of 20,000 on immigrants from Mexico was unrealistic in the 1960s and is even more so today with the much larger Mexican immigrant population in the United States. The misfit between the legal provisions and the reality of mass migration has created a large undocumented Mexican population in the United States.

Legal and illegal immigration from Mexico were further accelerated by the passage of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) in 1994 (International Federation for Human Rights 2006). Although NAFTA purportedly was designed to reduce immigration, it has caused large increases in the numbers of Mexican immigrants in the United States for three major reasons. First of all, NAFTA has had a devastating effect on the profitability of agriculture in Mexico. The entry of heavily subsidized US corn and other products into the Mexican market has made it unprofitable to grow corn in Mexico, and around two million Mexicans have been forced out of agriculture. These former peasants often move to cities to work, and, from there, many migrate to the United States. Second, NAFTA created favorable conditions in Mexico for large transnational retail corporations such as Wal-Mart, which forced many smaller businesses to close. These former entrepreneurs are also often potential migrants. Finally, NAFTA has resulted in the reduction of wages along the Mexican border (Bybee and Winter 2006). When workers are earning lower than the subsistence level, they are more likely to send a family member abroad to work or to migrate themselves in order to survive (Lopez 2007).

While the structural relations and networks bring us immigrants, many undocumented migrants are unable to legalize their status because of the increasingly restrictive legislation passed by Congress (Coutin 2002; Ngai 2004). In 1986, the Immigration Reform and Control Act (IRCA) was passed. The twin prongs of IRCA were to impose sanctions on employers who hired people not authorized to work in the United States and to offer a legalization option for people who had been living in the United States since 1982, but did not have authorization to live or work in the United States. The imposition of sanctions was meant to deter employers from hiring undocumented workers. Instead, it created an industry that produced fraudulent documentation that made it easy for anyone to obtain the (false) documents they needed to work (Fragomen and Bell 2007). IRCA came about in the context of concern over rising numbers of undocumented immigrants in the United States. The tightening economy, combined with the arrival of increasing numbers of Latin Americans, gave way to waves of nativism. These translated into Congressional action to do something with regard to undocumented migration, and led to the passage of IRCA (Inda 2006). As many scholars have argued, IRCA's harsh sanctions were notoriously unsuccessful in reducing the number of undocumented workers in the United States (Calavita 1989; Jenks 1997). Despite this evidence, similar tactics are being deployed with even more force today.

### **Cost/Benefit analyses of undocumented migration**

Since the 1980s, there has been increasing scholarly attention on the issue of undocumented migration. These studies tend to focus on the economic, social, and cultural costs and benefits of migration flows. Scholars that see current levels of immigration as economically detrimental proscribe more restrictive immigration laws (Camarota 2004; Krikorian 2008). For example, Steven Camarota (2004) of the Center for Immigration Studies argues that households with undocumented members pose a fiscal burden because undocumented people have low skill levels and thus low earnings potential. He notes that the fiscal burden is not due to low levels of employment or to heavy use of social services, but to the low wages undocumented workers earn. Many of the costs that Camarota mentions are related to the care for the children of undocumented people. These arguments are echoed by economist Barry Chiswick (1988), who points out that low-skilled foreign workers can be economically beneficial, so long as they do not bring their non-working family members with them to the United States. And, George Borjas (2004) argues that low-skilled immigrants are only beneficial to their employers, while they bring down the wages of their native low-skilled counterparts.

In contrast, other scholars see current levels of immigration as economically beneficial. Frank Bean et al. (1988) argue that undocumented workers do

not bring down native workers' wages. Kjetil Storesletten (2000) contends that high-skilled immigration is not only economically beneficial, but also necessary to maintain the fiscal health of the United States. Overall, it appears that the assessments of the economic advantages and disadvantages of immigration are based on what scholars choose to include in their analyses. Camarota includes the education of the US citizen children in his cost/benefit analysis, yet others might view this as a basic human right as well as something that will benefit the United States in the long term and thus not an economic drain.

While some scholars treat immigrants as commodities, others view migration as either a threat to or a safeguard for the cultural integrity of the United States. Samuel Huntington (2000), for example, points to the 'Mexican Problem' (4) as a 'unique, disturbing, and looming challenge to our core culture, our national identity, and potentially to our future as a country' (6–7). One of his critics, Fukuyama (2004), contends that Huntington is wrong insofar as Hispanic immigrants actually reinforce our cultural values with their strong emphases on family, work, and religion. In addition, the empirical study by Rogelio Saenz and his colleagues casts doubt on Huntington's claims insofar as they find that most Mexicans learn English, achieve upward economic and social mobility, and are generally assimilating into US society, albeit with the challenges associated with the racism they face (Saenz et al. 2007).

These discussions of the economic and cultural costs and benefits of migration make it clear that immigration policy is not working to the benefit of many people in the United States. However, they rarely address *why* the US Congress has not passed viable legislation to render immigration patterns more beneficial to the country. In this essay, I will focus primarily on immigration law enforcement and rhetoric with regard to undocumented migrants, who account for nearly half of all non-citizens in the United States. The reason for this focus on undocumented migration is because this paper addresses border and interior enforcement of immigration policy, and undocumented migrants (as well as would-be migrants) are the primary targets of these policies. Legal permanent residents who have committed crimes are also targeted by these policies, but space constraints prevent a discussion of this group and the punitive 1996 legislations that have resulted in the deportation of over a million legal permanent residents (UNHRC 2008). (For a comprehensive examination of the 1996 laws, see Welch 2002.)

## **Enforcing immigration laws**

Undocumented migrants have been targeted by harsh immigration policies in ebbs and flows since the passage of IRCA in 1986. Despite the limited efficacy of the immigration enforcement actions of the late 1980s and early 1990s, enforcement returned with new vigor in 2003. With the creation

of the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) in 2003, immigration enforcement was transferred from the Department of Justice to the DHS, now with a budget several times that of its predecessor. Immigrations and Customs Enforcement (ICE), a branch of DHS, has used these funds to carry out increasing numbers of immigration raids. In fiscal year 2002, prior to the creation of DHS, these raids led to just over 500 arrests; in 2007, they resulted in nearly 5,000. In order to achieve these increases, ICE has had to implement a 6-fold increase in the number of officers it has that carry out these worksite operations (ICE Annual Report 2007). The infusion of money into DHS has allowed it to more aggressively enforce immigration laws.

While scholars have predicted the failure of these measures (Calavita 1989; Donato et al. 1992), few have considered why Congress has passed laws that are destined to fail, and why Congress has appropriated billions of dollars to DHS to implement these laws. As Wayne Cornelius (2005, 15) puts it: 'Why does the United States' 10-year-old set of policies for controlling unauthorised immigration persist, long past the point when it became apparent that they are not working?' Cornelius briefly answers his own question by pointing to the political capital to be gained from being tough on immigration, the conflation of the War on Terror with immigration policy, and the 'insatiable appetite for immigrant labour - much of it lowskilled - which is not satisfied by existing laws and policies' (16).

In these concluding lines, Cornelius (2005) is hinting at a coalescence of interests in these failed policies. This idea of a confluence of interests resonates with the concept of an 'industrial-complex'. Scholars of migration have invoked this concept in their discussions of a 'security-industrial complex' (Koerner 2002; Mills 2004); the 'border-industrial complex' (Akers Chacón 2006); and the 'immigration-industrial complex' (Fernandes 2007; Koulis 2007). While they have each invoked this concept of an 'industrial-complex', they have mostly done this in passing, and have not taken full advantage of the complexity of this framework. However, it is of benefit to take their analyses one step further by fully taking into consideration the extensive work done in the areas of the prison and military industrial complexes.

Although sociologists have not considered at great length the profit potential of immigration policy, there is quite a bit of work in sociology on both the military industrial complex and the prison industrial complex that we can draw from in order to understand what I am calling, following the lead of Robert Koulis and Deepa Fernandes, the 'immigration industrial complex'. I have chosen this term from the three available because it is the best suited. The border is included in the framework of immigration policy, and immigration is only part of national security. A consideration of two other industrial complexes - the military and the prison - will help us to better understand how the immigration industrial complex works.

### **What is the military industrial complex?**

On his final night as President of the United States, in 1961, Dwight Eisenhower warned the American public of the dangers of the creation of a 'permanent armaments industry of vast proportions' (Eisenhower 1961). Eisenhower urged Americans to be wary of the potential for the 'unwarranted influence' of the 'military industrial complex'. These predictions turned out to be prescient and the US arms industry continued to grow and became heavily influential in the arms race in the coming decades.

In the 1960s and 1970s, the concept of a military-industrial complex dominated much of the critical discussion of US foreign and domestic policies. The basic idea behind this concept is that there are close relationships between the corporate elite, bureaucrats, and politicians, and these actors work together to ensure that state military investments serve the interests of capital (Cobb 1976; Moskos 1972). While there was general agreement that such a complex existed, there were disputes with regard to who benefited from it and how it actually worked. Much of this discussion centered around the 'self-serving accommodation between corporate elites, government bureaucrats, and the military hierarchy' (Moskos 1972, 499). Many sociologists used the framework provided by C. Wright Mills in *The Power Elite* to gain insight into how these actors came together to work in their own interest. As Moskos (1972) points out, this was not generally a Marxist analysis, insofar as the focus was not on the 'economic relations of classes to the means of production,' but on the way elite bureaucrats used their power and position to their advantage (502). The justifications for the build-up of the military industrial complex were largely due to an external threat – the spectre of Communism. In contrast, the justification for the prison-industrial complex was based on an internal threat – the fear of crime.

### **What is the prison industrial complex?**

In the early 1990s, writers began to explore the idea of a prison industrial complex, drawing from the scholarly analyses of the military industrial complex. In 1995, Mike Davis mentioned the prison industrial complex in a *Nation* article about the rise of prisons in California. These ideas were expanded on and taken to a national level by Eric Schlosser and Angela Davis in 1998, and then by a great many other thinkers in the past decade.

The prison industrial complex (PIC) refers to the vast network of prisons, jails, courts, police officers, and other elements that purport to reduce the amount of criminal activity in our society. The PIC is a 'self-perpetuating machine': the enormous investment in prisons, jails and law enforcement combined with the perceived political benefits of crime control have led to policies that ensure that more people are sentenced to prison, thereby creating the need for more prison beds (Brewer and



Heitzeg 2008, 637). A core feature of the idea of a prison industrial complex is that prisons are not built solely to house criminals, but that a confluence of interests has led to the building of more prisons, the enactment of harsher laws, and the mass incarceration of poor people. Those constituencies with interests in this mass incarceration include the media, private contractors, politicians, state bureaucracies, and private prisons (Davis 1998; Do Valle et al. 2006; Gilmore 2007; Schlosser 1998).

The prison industrial complex has come into being because it serves the interests of powerful groups in our society. Politicians have used a tough-on-crime approach to gain votes. The mass media has highlighted local crime in order to attract viewers (Chermak 1994). Rural areas have turned to building prisons to boost local economic development – over two thirds of the prisons built in California between 1982 and 1998 were built on formerly irrigated agricultural land that was out of production (Gilmore 2007, 105–106). Finally, private prisons have cashed in on growing rates of incarceration (Brewer and Heitzeg 2008; Do Valle et al. 2006; Schlosser 1998). For these reasons, not because of excessive rates of criminality, we now have over two million people behind bars in the United States, over ten times as many as we did prior to the 1970s. The mass incarceration of poor people has generated profits for private prisons and political capital for politicians; yet, it has not made this country any safer (Hattery and Smith 2006).

### **Crime and immigration: the failure of policy**

The prison industrial complex is maintained because of fear of crime, political maneuvers and interests, and profit potentials for powerful interest groups. This convergence of powerful interests combined with the fact that the primary victims are marginalized poor people explains why policies have not changed in response to research that clearly demonstrates that being tough on crime does not lead to safer communities. In 1998, Angela Davis pointed out that, '[m]ass incarceration is not a solution to unemployment, nor is it a solution to the vast array of social problems that are hidden away in a rapidly growing network of prisons and jails. However, the great majority of people have been tricked into believing in the efficacy of imprisonment, even though the historical record clearly demonstrates that prisons do not work' (3).

As Angela Davis and others have argued, incarceration has a limited impact on crime rates. First of all, it is just one of many factors that influence crime rates: changes in the economy, fluctuations in the drug market, and community-level responses have similar effects on crime rates. Second, there are diminishing returns to incarceration: incarcerating repeat violent offenders takes these people off of the street and thus reduces crimes, while incarcerating large numbers of non-violent offenders has a minimal effect on crime rates (King et al. 2005).

The United States has many more people in prison and much longer sentence terms than other Western countries. In the United States, 1 in every 150 people are in prison, which is 6 to 12 times more than the rates in other Western democracies (Tonry 1999). This is despite the fact that victimization surveys show that violent and property crime rates are about the same as in other countries. The only sort of crime for which the United States has a higher rate than other countries is gun violence (Tonry 1999). The high rates of incarceration in the United States are thus not due to high rates of crime, but to policies designed to 'get tough' on crime and drugs. These policies do not serve to reduce crime, but represent 'a shift toward a more exclusionary and punitive approach to the regulation of social marginality' (Beckett and Western 2001, 55). Moreover, despite the fact that crime rates have declined in recent years, incarceration rates continue to increase (Mauer 2001).

Notwithstanding the low efficacy of imprisoning non-violent offenders, this is the segment of the prison population that has grown the fastest. Between 1970 and 2000, incarceration rates in the United States increased 5-fold. Much of this increase was due to legislation designed to fight drugs. As such, drug offenders represent 'the most substantial source of growth in incarceration in recent decades, rising from 40,000 persons in prison and jail in 1980 to 450,000 today' (King et al. 2005: 6). The irony of this is that the incarceration of drug offenders is perhaps the least effective strategy in terms of law enforcement. When street-level drug sellers are incarcerated, they are quickly replaced by other sellers, since what drives the drug market is demand for drugs. This is in contrast with armed robbers, or serial killers, for example, who are not so easily replaceable (King et al. 2005).

One can also gather evidence from large-scale trends to show that increased incarceration does not necessarily decrease crime rates. Between 1998 and 2003, some states greatly increased the number of people that they sent to prison, while other states did not. The average decrease in the crime rates in these states, however, was similar. The states with higher increases in incarceration did not experience more substantial declines in their crime rates (King et al. 2005). Despite the lack of evidence that increased incarceration rates lead to decreased crimes (Lynch 1999), we continue to build prisons and imprison more people (Gilmore 2007).

Ideas of racial otherness play an important role in the demonization of criminals and the undocumented. This other-ization allows politicians to play on public fears and portray these groups as threatening to public safety. As Michael Welch argues, the punitive legislation passed in the last decades of the twentieth century to control crime and immigration are 'not only poorly formulated, but also unjust and discriminatory against the poor and people of color' (2002, 14). Welch further contends that these laws are passed in the context of a 'moral panic, a turbulent

and exaggerated response to a putative social problem' (2002, 8). There is evidence of a moral panic in terms of both crime and immigration policy.

Similar to the failure of crime policy, there is substantial research that demonstrates quite conclusively that tougher immigration policies fail to achieve their stated goals (Cornelius and Rosenblum 2006; Golash-Boza and Parker 2007; Massey et al. 2002). The militarization of the border merely pushes migrants and would-be migrants to more remote areas to cross the border. Many deportees, especially Mexicans, simply return to the United States. They return because of extensive family ties in the United States and because they know there are jobs available. Immigration raids attract media attention, but directly affect less than one percent of the undocumented labor force. Despite the evidence that these strategies are unsuccessful, these tactics have been put into practice with increased force over the past few years. The current wave of enforcement has been made possible with increased funding for the War on Terror.

### **The war on terror: conflating national security with immigration enforcement**

The Department of Homeland Security has a massive budget (\$46 billion), largely because of the War on Terror. The War on Terror, however, has translated into a War on Immigrants, because of the conflation of national security with immigration law enforcement. Immigration enforcement lies within the domain of DHS, and the budget for enforcement increased substantially in the aftermath of 9/11. The budget for Customs and Border Patrol (CBP) nearly doubled from \$5.8 billion in FY 2003 to \$10.1 billion in FY 2008. In a similar fashion, the budget for ICE was increased from \$3.2 billion in 2003 to \$5 billion in 2008. This increase meant that the budget for ICE alone in 2008 was double the entire Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) budget in 1996 (National Network for Immigrant and Refugee Rights 2008). Despite these vast increases in the budget for immigration enforcement, these measures have not led to any decreases in the population of undocumented immigrants. Moreover, the Department of Homeland Security continues to enact, albeit with greater force, the exact same strategies that its predecessor, the INS, used, despite plenty of evidence that these strategies are ineffective. Nevertheless, Congress continues to appropriate billions of dollars to beef up the Border Patrol and to carry out more immigration raids. These tactics make the lives of immigrants more difficult, but do little to address the greater challenges presented by the presence of a large undocumented population.

There have been numerous studies that demonstrate the inefficacy of tough immigration laws, but these results have fallen on deaf ears in Congress. For example, in a testimony prepared for the House Judiciary

Committee in August 2006, Professor Wayne Cornelius presented evidence that increasing border enforcement does not discourage unauthorized migration. Cornelius (2006) argued that:

tightened border enforcement since 1993 has not stopped nor even discouraged unauthorized migrants from entering the United States. Even if apprehended, the vast majority (92–97%) keep trying until they succeed. Neither the higher probability of being apprehended by the Border Patrol, nor the sharply increased danger of clandestine entry through deserts and mountainous terrain, has discouraged potential migrants from leaving home. ... With clandestine border crossing an increasingly expensive and risky business, US border enforcement policy has unintentionally encouraged undocumented migrants to remain in the US for longer periods and settle permanently in this country in much larger numbers.

Despite mounting evidence that increased border enforcement does not decrease illegal entries into the United States, the only immigration legislation to be passed in the wake of the massive immigrants' rights marches in 2006 focused exclusively on border enforcement. Shortly after Cornelius presented his convincing data in August 2006, the Secure Fence Act passed the House on September 14, 2006, and the Senate on September 29, 2006, with very few dissenting votes in either body. The Secure Fence Act authorized the building of a 700-mile barrier at the southern border of the United States. Congress has yet to appropriate the billions of dollars needed to erect this barrier, which is likely to lead to more migrant deaths, as migrants are pushed into more remote regions of the borderlands (Anguiano Téllez 2007; Cornelius 2006).

In a similar fashion, the removal of all undocumented migrants through interior enforcement is not a practical solution. Since 2003, ICE has expanded its interior enforcement operations. This, however, has not led to a reduction in the number of undocumented migrants in the United States. One strategy that ICE deploys is worksite enforcement operations, which are designed to eliminate the 'job magnet'. ICE has as its goal making 18,000 arrests per year through these raids. This is a far cry from the estimated seven million undocumented workers in the United States. At 18,000 arrests per year, it would take four centuries to remove all of the undocumented workers. ICE does employ other strategies, and, in 2007, managed to remove 276,912 undocumented people from the United States – only about two percent of all undocumented people in the United States. With these unprecedented numbers of removals, ICE is running at full capacity, and does not have the judges, lawyers, enforcement agents, vehicles, or facilities to remove more people. While ICE promotes the rhetoric that they are going to deport all 'deportable aliens', they clearly do not have the capacity to do so.

Not only is it practically impossible to prevent migrants from crossing our 2000-mile border with Mexico, or to remove nearly 12 million undocumented people from this country, certain sectors of the labor

market depend heavily on undocumented immigrants for labor. The undocumented labor force constitutes nearly 5 percent of the civilian labor force in the United States. This includes 29 percent of all agricultural workers, 29 percent of all roofers, 22 percent of all maids and housekeepers, and 27 percent of all people working in food processing (Passel 2006). Without this undocumented labor force, it is likely that food grown in the United States would be grown elsewhere, thereby raising prices for consumers. It is also likely that processed meats would be more expensive and less available, meaning most Americans would have to cut their own chickens into chicken tenders. And, fewer people would have access to maids, housecleaners, and nannies. In addition, many of the companies that provide those services would close, meaning the loss of jobs for the administrators, and, in turn, for their local service providers.

## Conclusion

The discord between rhetoric and reality when it comes to immigration policy points to the importance of using a framework similar to that of the prison industrial complex and the military industrial complex to understand the immigration industrial complex. These three complexes share three major features: (a) a rhetoric of fear; (b) the confluence of powerful interests; and (c) a discourse of other-ization. With the military build-up during the Cold War, the 'others' were communists. With the prison expansion of the 1990s, the 'others' were criminals (often racialized and gendered as black men). With the expansion of the immigration industrial complex, the 'others' are 'illegals' (racialized as Mexicans). In each case, the creation of an undesirable other creates popular support for government spending to safeguard the nation.

This essay has demonstrated that the frameworks developed to understand the military build-up and the prison expansion are useful for gaining insight into the current surge in immigration law enforcement, as well as the recent passage of punitive legislation. In each of these cases, a culture of fear directed at an undesirable other has justified massive government expenditures. And, in each case, marginalized groups have paid the heaviest price for the enrichment of the powerful and well connected. This is the essence of an industrial complex.

## Acknowledgments

The author would like to thank Cherise Harris and Marisha Humphries for the conversations that led to this article, David Stovall and the anonymous reviewers for their valuable feedback, the online BAC group for their endless inspiration, and David Brunsuma for his encouragement to write this piece.

## Short Biography

Tanya Golash-Boza is an Assistant Professor at the University of Kansas. She is finishing up a book manuscript, tentatively titled *Yo Soy Negro: Discourses of Blackness in Peru*. Dr. Golash-Boza's research also considers racial and ethnic identification among Latinos and Latinas, as well as the human rights consequences of U.S. immigration policies. Her recent articles have appeared in *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, *Social Forces*, and *International Migration Review*. Her latest work is on deportees in the Caribbean region.

## Note

\* Correspondence address: 716 Fraser Hall, 1415 Jayhawk Blvd, Lawrence, Kansas 66045, USA. E-mail: [tgb@ku.edu](mailto:tgb@ku.edu)

## References

- Akers Chacón, Justin and Mike Davis 2006. *No One is Illegal: Fighting Racism and State Violence on the U.S.-Mexico Border*. Chicago, IL: Haymarket Books.
- Anguiano Téllez, Maria Eugenia 2007. 'Detour through the Sonora-Arizona Desert: New Routes of Mexican emigration to the United States' *The Journal of Latino-Latin American Studies* 2(4): 4–19.
- Bean, Fran, B. Lindsay Lowell and Lowell J. Taylor 1988. 'Undocumented Mexican Immigrants and the Earnings of Other Workers in the United States.' *Demography* 25(1): 35–52.
- Beckett, Katherine and Bruce Western 2001. 'Governing Social Marginality: Welfare, Incarceration and the Transformation of State Policy' *Punishment and Society* 3(1): 43–59.
- Borjas, George 2004. 'Increasing the Supply of Labor through Immigration: Measuring the Impact on Native-born Workers' Center for Immigration Studies.
- Brewer, Rose M. and Nancy Heitzeg 2008. 'The Racialization of Crime and Punishment: Criminal Justice, Color-Blind Racism, and the Political Economy of the Prison Industrial Complex' *American Behavioral Scientist* 51(5): 625–644.
- Bybee, Roger and Carolyn Winter 2006. 'Immigration Flood Unleashed by NAFTA's Disastrous Impact on Mexican Economy' *Common Dreams* April 25. Online at: <http://www.commondreams.org/views06/0425-30.htm> Accessed 10 October 2008.
- Calavita, Kitty 1989. 'Contradictions of Immigration Lawmaking: The Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986' *Law and Policy* 11(1): 17–48.
- Camarota, Steven 2004. 'The High Cost of Cheap Labor: Illegal Immigration and the Federal Budget.' Center for Immigration Studies.
- Chermak, Steven M. 1994. 'Body Count News: How Crime Is Presented in the News Media' *Justice Quarterly* 11(4): 561–582.
- Chiswick, Barry 1988. 'Illegal Immigration and Immigration Control' *Journal of Economic Perspectives* 2(3): 101–115.
- Cobb, Stephen 1976. 'Defense Spending and Defense Voting in the House: An Empirical Study of an Aspect of the Military-Industrial Complex Thesis' *The American Journal of Sociology* 82(1): 163–182.
- Cornelius, Wayne 2005. 'Controlling "Unwanted" Immigration: Lessons from the United States, 1993–2004' *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 31: 4. Online at: <http://www.cri.uci.edu/pdf/JEMS--final.pdf>
- Cornelius, Wayne 2006. 'Impacts of border Enforcement on unauthorized mexican migration to the united states: testimony prepared for the house judiciary committee field hearing on immigration.' San Diego, Calif., August 2. Online at: <http://judiciary.house.gov/media/pdfs/cornelius080206.pdf> Accessed 11 July 2008.

- Cornelius, Wayne and Marc R. Rosenblum 2005. 'Immigration and Politics' *Annual Review of Political Science* 8: 99–119.
- Coutin, Susan Bibler 2002. 'Questionable Transactions as Grounds for Legalization: Immigration, Illegality and the Law' *Crime, Law and Social Change* 37: 19–36.
- Davis, Angela 1998. 'Masked Racism: Reflections on the Prison Industrial Complex' *Colorlines* 2. Online at: <http://www.colorlines.com/article.php?ID=309&p=1> Accessed 10 October 2008.
- Davis, Mike 1995. 'Hell Factories in the Field: a Prison-Industrial Complex' *Radical Urban Theory*. Online at: <http://www.radicalurbantheory.com/mdavis/hellfactories.html> Accessed 11 July 2008.
- Do Valle, Alice, Vanessa Huang and Mari Spira 2006. 'The prison industrial complex: a deliberation' *International Feminist Journal of Politics* 8(1): 130–144.
- Donato, Katharine, Jorge Durand and Douglas S. Massey 1992. 'Stemming the Tide?: Assessing the Deterrent Effects of the Immigration Reform and Control Act' *Demography* 29(2): 139–157.
- Eisenhower, Dwight 1961. 'Eisenhower's Farewell Address to the Nation' January 17. Online at: <http://www.informationclearinghouse.info/article5407.htm> Accessed 10 October 2008.
- Fernandes, Deepa 2007. *Targeted: National Security and the Business of Immigration*. St. Paul, MN: Seven Stories Press.
- Fragomen, Austin T. and Steven Bell 2007. 'Entry of Aliens to the United States: The Basic Structure' *Immigration Fundamentals: A Guide to Law and Practice*. New York, NY: Practising Law Institute.
- Fukuyama, Francis 2004. 'Identity Crisis: Why we shouldn't worry about Mexican immigration.' *Slate* Friday, June 4.
- Gilmore, Ruth 2007. *Golden Gulag: Prisons, Surplus, Crisis and Opposition in Globalizing California*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.
- Golash-Boza, Tanya and Douglas Parker 2007. 'Human Rights in a Globalizing World: Who Pays the Human Cost of Migration?' *The Journal of Latino-Latin American Studies* 2(4): 34–46.
- Hattery, Angela and Earl Smith 2006. 'The Prison Industrial Complex.' *Sociation Today* 4: 2. Online at: <http://www.ncsociology.org/sociationtoday/v42/prison.htm> Accessed 10 October 2008.
- Hoefler, Michael, Nancy Rytina and Christopher Campbell 2007. 'Estimates of the Unauthorized Immigrant Population Residing in the United States: January 2006,' Office of Immigration Statistics, Policy Directorate, US Department of Homeland Security Online at: [http://www.dhs.gov/xlibrary/assets/statistics/publications/ill\\_pe\\_2006.pdf](http://www.dhs.gov/xlibrary/assets/statistics/publications/ill_pe_2006.pdf) Accessed 10 October 2008.
- Hoefler, Michael, Nancy Rytina and Bryan C. Baker 2008. 'Estimates of the Unauthorized Immigrant Population Residing in the United States: January 2007' Office of Immigration Statistics, Policy Directorate, US Department of Homeland Security, Online at: [http://www.dhs.gov/xlibrary/assets/statistics/publications/ois\\_ill\\_pe\\_2007.pdf](http://www.dhs.gov/xlibrary/assets/statistics/publications/ois_ill_pe_2007.pdf)
- Huntington, Samuel 2000. 'Reconsidering Immigration.' Center for Immigration Studies. November. Online at: [www.cis.org/articles/2000/back1100.html](http://www.cis.org/articles/2000/back1100.html) Accessed 9 October 2008.
- Inda, Johnathan 2006. *Targeting Immigrants: Government, Technology and Ethics*. Oxford, UK: Blackwell Publishing.
- International Federation for Human Rights 2006. 'Mexico; The North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA): Effects on Human Rights' No. 448, Volume 2. April. Online at: <http://www.fidh.org/IMG/pdf/Mexique448-ang2006.pdf> Accessed 10 October 2008.
- Jenks, Rosemary 1997. 'Identification Document Fraud' Testimony prepared for the US House of Representatives Committee on the Judiciary Subcommittee on Immigration, Border Security, and Claims. May 13. Online at: <http://www.cis.org/articles/1997/jenks51397.htm> Accessed 10 October 2008.
- Joppke, Christian 1998. 'Why Liberal States Accept Unwanted Immigration' *World Politics* 50(2): 266–293.
- King, Ryan, Marc Mauer and Malcolm C. Young 2005. 'Incarceration and Crime: a Complex Relationship' The Sentencing Project. Online at: [http://www.sentencingproject.org/Admin/Documents/publications/inc\\_iandc\\_complex.pdf](http://www.sentencingproject.org/Admin/Documents/publications/inc_iandc_complex.pdf) Accessed 8 October 2008.
- Koerner, Brendan I. 2002. 'The Security Traders' *Mother Jones* September/October.

- Koulish, Robert 2007. 'Privatizing the Leviathan Immigration State' *Monthly Review* Zine July 20. Online at: <http://mrzine.monthlyreview.org/koulish200707.html> Accessed 10 October 2008.
- Krikorian, Mark 2008. *The New Case Against Immigration: Both Legal and Illegal*. New York, NY: Sentinel.
- López, Ann Aurelia 2007. *The Farmworkers' Journey*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.
- Lynch, Michael 1999. 'Beating a Dead Horse: Is there any basic empirical evidence for the deterrent effect of imprisonment?' *Crime, Law and Social Change* 31: 347–362.
- Massey, Douglas, Jorge Durand, and Nolan Malone 2002. *Beyond Smoke and Mirrors: Mexican Immigration in an Era of Economic Integration*. New York, NY: Russell Sage Foundation.
- Mauer, Marc 2001. 'The Causes and Consequences of Prison Growth in the United States' *Punishment and Society* 3(1): 9–20.
- Mills, Mark 2004. 'On My Mind: The Security-Industrial Complex.' *Forbes* Nov. 29.
- Moskos, Charles C. 1972. 'The Concept of the Military-Industrial Complex: Radical Critique or Liberal Bogey?' *Social Problems* 21(4): 498–512.
- National Network for Immigrant and Refugee Rights 2008. 'Rights of Immigrants in and Migrants to the United States.' Submitted by the National Network for Immigrant and Refugee Rights. Available online at: <http://www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/cerd/docs/ngos/usa/USHRN3.doc> Accessed 11 July 2008.
- Ngai, Mae 2004. *Impossible Subjects: Illegal Aliens and the Making of Modern America*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Passel, Jeffrey 2006 'The Size and Characteristics of the Unauthorized Migrant Population in the US Estimates Based on the March 2005 Current Population Survey' Pew Hispanic Center. Online at: <http://pewhispanic.org/files/execsum/61.pdf> Accessed 10 October 2008.
- Saenz, Rogelio, Janie Filoteo and Aurelia Lorena Murga 2007. 'Are Mexicans in the United States a Threat to the American Way of Life?' *Du Bois Review: Social Science Research on Race* 4(2): 375–393.
- Sassen, Saskia 1989: 'America's "Immigration Problem"', *World Policy* 6(Fall): 811–32.
- Schlosser, Eric 1998. 'The Prison-Industrial Complex.' *The Atlantic Monthly*.
- Storesletten, Kjetil 2000. 'Sustaining Fiscal Policy through Immigration' *Journal of Political Economy* 108(2): 300–323.
- Tonry, Michael 1999. 'Why are US Incarceration Rates So High?' *Crime and Delinquency* 45(4): 419–437.
- Welch, Michael 2002. *Detained: Immigration Laws and the Expanding I.N.S. Jail Complex*. Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press.