

BOOK REVIEW

Bans, Walls, Raids, Sanctuary: Understanding US Immigration for the Twenty-First Century

by A. Naomi Paik (University of California
Press, 2020)

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DR. A. NAOMI PAIK'S SCHOLARLY CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE EXPANSION of abolitionist studies began in 2010, with her work initially examining the effects of imperial militarism on targeted communities' human rights. Her first book, *Rightlessness: Testimony and Redress in US Prison Camps since World War II* (University of North Carolina Press, 2018), featured the voices of inhabitants of US prison camps and their various experiences resisting a system that strips from them the right to even possess rights.

In *Bans, Walls, Raids, Sanctuary: Understanding US Immigration for the Twenty-First Century*, Paik gives the reader an epistemological foundation for the historical US legacy of violence against immigrants. In an effort to address the emergent concerns and anxieties that Donald Trump's ascension to political power brought to her students and her community, Paik took it upon herself to trace the lineage of US anti-immigrant rhetoric to its willfully forgotten roots. In order to do this, Paik created a genealogy of four specific themes—bans, walls, raids, and sanctuary—that scaffold the book's overarching examination of historic spaces of racialized exclusion and removal. Paik's most salient concern is situating current legal atrocities

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within those historical political actions in the United States that were equally monstrous. The goal of this new work from Paik is to educate readers with the knowledge that they need to organize and combat these xenophobic and ethnocentric structures of oppression and domination.

In the book's first section on bans, Paik begins by highlighting the distinctions historically made between so-called desired and undesired immigrants as the key to understanding common misconceptions of the US as a nation of immigrants. Through a succinct chronological overview of exclusionary legislation and policies, Paik establishes the historically rooted discriminatory malfeasance extolled upon those considered undesired in this country, juxtaposing ideas about a nation of immigrants with the real life, commonplace, legal ramifications inflicted upon them. The author indicates that although this systematic exclusion has had racial motivations from the very beginning, race has not been the sole motive for discriminatory treatment. Throughout our history, immigrants have been subjected to and defined by the label of undesirable, a designation that preserves notions of the United States as a white-Christian nation with similarly racialized ideas about so-called American values. The ideological production of such notions occurs consistently, as when Wolf Blitzer broadcast his disbelief that Timothy McVeigh and Terry Nichols could have no ties to Middle Eastern terrorism, or when the Trump administration's Muslim ban effectively targeted anyone who looked Muslim, Middle Eastern, or Arab. Riddled by this blatant newspeak, the administration's reliance on post-9/11 nationalism is still prevalent and has to ignore key information, such as the fact that most Arab Americans are Christian, in order to maintain legitimacy. The Trump administration, Paik convincingly argues, wanted you to look American, understood through dog whistles, executive orders, and legislation, as white.

Throughout her analysis, Paik calls attention to the unchecked executive powers that coincide with legislative efforts to craft and establish migratory policies by invoking concerns about national security. Paik refers to the anti-Muslim sentiments that arose, and persist, after the events of 9/11 in the United States. These powers were consolidated and sheltered through the passing of the egregious Patriot Act in 2001. Paik sheds much-needed light upon the problem of theatricality behind the constant emphasis on physical and geographical barriers and the narratives that accompany them. In the emphasis on physical representations of deterrence, such as an overpowering and increasingly expanding border patrol force and the reconstruction of a material wall on the border, theatricality consolidates and expands public

support for these measures regardless of their efficacy, exploiting ideas of dangerousness linked to the alterity of those considered foreign.

In the section on walls, the author discusses the very icon of Trump's immigration agenda, the construction of the US-Mexico wall. In this section, Paik recounts the permeable fluidity of geographical borders through an historical examination of the record of inclusion, exclusion, segregation, and removal experienced by Asian and Latin American immigrants. Connecting with other labor and migration scholars, Paik points toward the foundational utility of illegality and deportability to the preservation and reproduction of the current economic system. In an efficient comparison, the author explores the contrast between the ineffective theatricality of physical borders (i.e., a border wall) and the inconspicuous yet efficient and almost omnipresent digital surveillance technologies that blur the lines between the public and private sectors.

In the section on raids, Paik examines just how few rights people living in this country legally possess. She proceeds to show how this has always been the case and how a broad range of infractions can ultimately lead to a person not born in the United States being declared a significant threat to national security and therefore a removable other or deportable immigrant. Paik lays out how law enforcement agencies such as Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) consider themselves to be shackled by existing laws, and how Trump's executive order enabled considerable expansion of their efforts. In one particularly chilling example, Paik writes of ICE's separation of Guadalupe Garcia Aguilar, a mother of two US citizens and a resident of the United States for 22 years, from her only family only fourteen days after Trump signed the executive order negating her Obama-era right to stay in the country. This section narrates how those initial actions of ICE were designed to spark fear in the hearts and minds of immigrant communities while simultaneously signaling to the president's political base that he was delivering on his bulwark and xenophobic campaign promises. In characteristic crisp and concise prose, Paik expertly explains how the expansion of law enforcement powers at the borders bleeds back into the interior of the country itself, not existing solely on the fringes but emboldening the ethnocentric rhetoric and inevitable actions taken when a human being is declared illegal.

The fourth section serves as a brief genealogy of sanctuary work in the United States and a call to consider specific venues of action given the circumstances previously discussed. For Paik, sanctuary policies are necessary and have a value in themselves as beacons of resistance against

an authoritarian state that seeks to erase and criminalize noncitizens. It is precisely the tethering of government structures and the neoliberal order that has hindered the potential of sanctuaries. By calling out the problem of normalizing the securitization of the state through violent means, she proposes an abolitionist approach to sanctuary that would address the root causes of structures that enable the continuous targeting of individuals, both domestic and foreign-born. Abolitionist sanctuary takes form by enhancing community collaboration and mutual aid initiatives while still challenging attempts to continue to fund carceral efforts. These initiatives must prevail until the need for sanctuary no longer exists.

The book goes on to place our current political actions in a historical context, detailing the long history of deploying a staunch US deportation apparatus, one that has deported more than 50 million people since 1970, a staggering number indeed. *Bans, Walls, Raids, Sanctuary* is written with the obvious end goal of countering the powerful narratives put forth by certain government officials, political parties, and the mainstream media that seek to frame immigration as a legal battle, rather than a human rights obligation. This book successfully disrupts the idea that existing immigration law and practice is benign, simply put in place to help the United States defend itself from foreign combatants and other threats. Rather, Paik shows, immigration enforcement has always been about the administration of particular ideas of racialized social order. Ultimately, *Bans, Walls, Raids, Sanctuary* reveals the central role of immigration enforcement and related ideological production in the presage broadcast by the Trump administration. Paik argues for the importance of counternarratives in the fight against the injustice of alterity itself and her book offers an accessible and dialectical reference for just such a struggle. Ultimately, this book reveals the role of immigration enforcement and related ideological production in the nationalistic warning sign broadcast by the Trump administration.