



From Deportation to Prison: The Politics of Immigration Enforcement in Post-Civil Rights America (Latina/o Sociology)

Patrisia Macías-Rojas

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Criminal prosecutions for immigration offenses have more than doubled over the last two decades, as national debates about immigration rights and reforms became headline topics. What lies behind this unprecedented increase? Why are immigration violations treated as criminal offenses? How do deportation, detention, and criminal prosecution actually operate, and how do enforcement priorities that target “felons” and “criminals” work in policy and practice?

From Deportation to Prison unpacks how immigration enforcement has changed in relation to the Department of Homeland Security’s “Criminal Alien Program,” a program expanded in the 1980s to purge non-citizens from dangerously overcrowded jails and prisons. Patrisia Macías-Rojas interviewed Border Patrol agents, local law enforcement, federal district attorneys and public defenders, border residents, and migrants themselves. The findings reveal how the merging of immigration enforcement and the criminal justice system has transformed arrest and deportation at the U.S.-Mexico border. Macías-Rojas argues that, among other factors, massive federal funding for detention beds and a policy of “criminal alien removal” now drive a federal focus on federal criminal prosecution and imprisonment for immigration offenses.

Today’s border policing and immigration law enforcement practices are less concerned with distinguishing immigrants from citizens than with classifying people as either deserving or undeserving of rights: as “victims” or “criminals.” The distinction has serious implications for migrants and residents of predominantly Latina/o border communities, and Macías-Rojas shows how, within this new regime, such strategic divisions serve to justify aggressive punishment for those branded as criminals. Overall, *From Deportation to Prison* presents a thorough and captivating exploration of how mass incarceration and law and order policies of the past forty years have transformed immigration and border enforcement in unexpected and important ways.

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