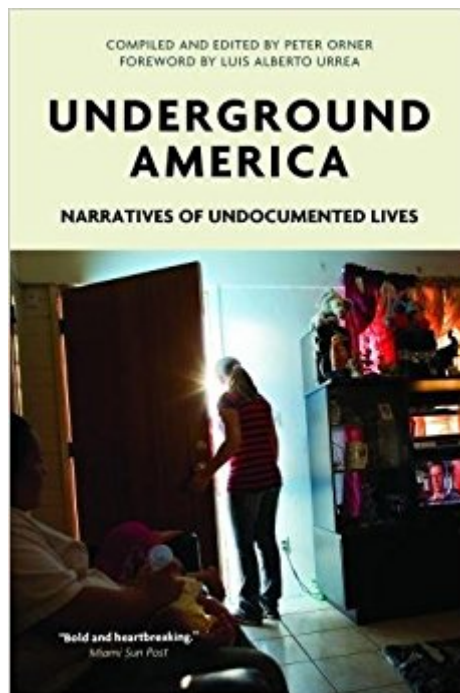




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# Underground America: Narratives Of Undocumented Lives (Voice Of Witness)



## Synopsis

Millions of immigrants risk deportation and imprisonment by living in the US without legal status. They are living underground, with little protection from exploitation at the hands of human smugglers, employers, or law enforcement. *Underground America* presents the remarkable oral histories of men and women struggling to carve a life for themselves in the US.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Starred Review. McSweeney's Voices of Witness series continues (following *Voices of the Storm* and *Surviving Justice*) with this collection of oral histories from undocumented immigrants, aka "illegal aliens": "We hear a lot about these people in the media... how they are responsible for crime... take our jobs... and refuse to speak English. But how often do we hear from them?" Culled from new interviews, the book's 24 subjects come from around the world (Mexico, China, South Africa, Colombia, Cameroon and others), each offering a vivid, personal, often wrenching and occasionally enraging first-person look into the immigrant experience, what editor and novelist Orner calls a "state of permanent anxiety." Roberto, for instance, details narrow brushes with government agents as well as the everyday dangers inherent to unregulated work: "Nectarines are covered in this dust that makes your skin itch... You wear gloves when you're picking them but, because of the sweat, your skin absorbs everything, right into the pores." Diana, from Peru, worked on Hurricane Katrina cleanup and reconstruction crews while living 20 or more to a house: "I still have spots on

my legs... from the chemicals and insulation that came off the walls at those jobsites." Average news-watchers who think they have a grasp on the immigration debate may well find these stories, speaking for millions of invisible American residents, no less than revelatory. Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. --This text refers to an alternate Paperback edition.

“In a time when history is told in cheap television reenactments, if at all, and personal tragedy is gobbled up in rapidly digestible magazine photos and reality shows, this project goes against the grain.”

- Guardian “Bold and heartbreaking.”
- Miami SunPost “Average news-watchers who think they have a grasp on the immigration debate may well find these stories, speaking for millions of invisible American residents, no less than revelatory.”
- Publisher’s Weekly (starred review)

When Vica was picked up by Immigration and placed in detention, she was already visibly sick from HIV that had progressed to AIDS. She had been arrested for drinking and driving, and a background check exposed her lack of documents. She pleaded with the guards to let her see a doctor so that she could get back on her medications, but they refused. It wasn’t until she was crippled by a high fever and diarrhea that they finally allowed her to go to a hospital, but by then it was too late. Her mother, Olga, heard what was happening to her daughter, the child born of rape for which she was exiled from her family in Mexico, yet was powerless to do anything. If she went to the hospital, she feared deportation or worse. After many phone calls, an advocate arranged for visitation papers, so that Olga could be by her daughter’s side for the last painful hours of her life. And as she held her daughter’s withered body in her arms, Olga saw that her little girl was chained to the bed like a dog.

In the midst of the debate over immigration reform and border security in our country, both democratic and republican politicians have a fair share of airtime to argue their opinions on the issue. However, the voice of American immigrants, the people whose lives are most affected by this legislation, have had no voice in this issue, no chance to offer up their own stories. The media portrayal of immigrant families is a bizarre caricature, focused entirely on their status, with no trace of humanity in the statistics. As a result, the most vehement voices in the debate actively dehumanize this segment of American society as either noble savages or dangerous criminals. Vica’s story has no place in today’s debate, for she is neither a saint nor a sinner, she is simply a human being. While Vica’s voice has been permanently silenced, in *Underground America*, Olga and

fifteen other men and women are given an opportunity to have a voice, to tell their story without fear of retribution. Their stories do not fit well into stereotypes or any simplistic narrative you'll hear on cable news. Rather, they contain the beautiful and compelling complexity that is inherent in every human life. This is a powerful book, not only for the emotional content of the stories, but for its great potential to re-humanize the debate on immigration reform in our country. To all those who hold strong opinions on immigration, this book is a must read

pretty good

The book has a strong grasp on personal narratives!

Great

So good. Can't put it down. The stories from these human beings are unforgettable.

Underground America is a real life base story. These stories make take away the hidden nature of the underground in the United States. It unveils the suffering and discrimination that undocumented people faced when they come to the US. Read more

There are a lot stories that are very intriguing. The stories that are in there, are very touching and you can some what relate to them.

It looked brand new I loooove it :)

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