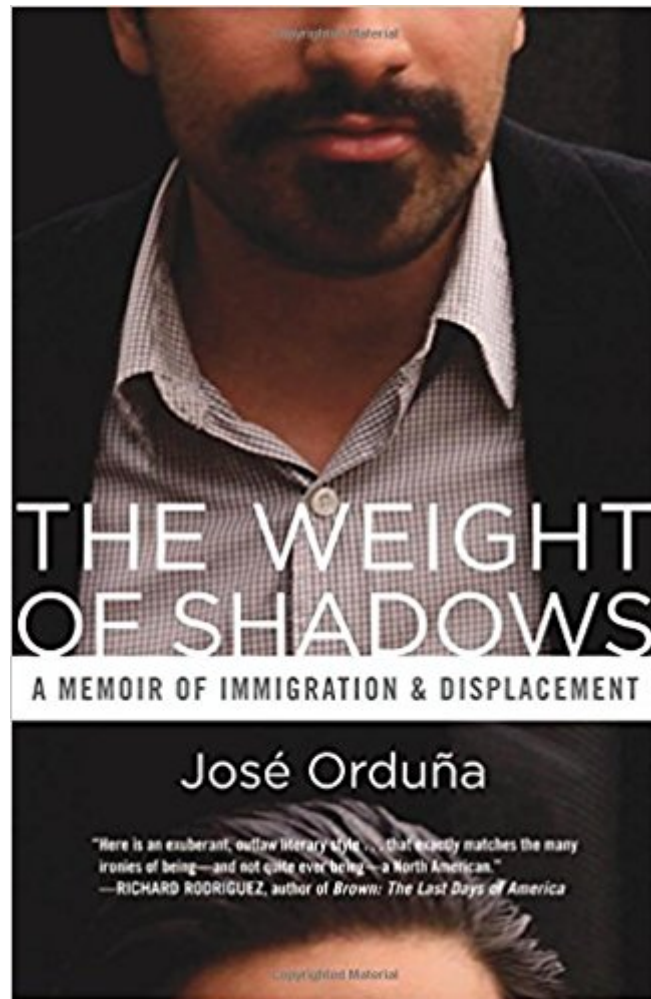


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The Weight Of Shadows: A Memoir Of Immigration & Displacement



Synopsis

Tracing his story of becoming a US citizen, JosÁ© OrduÁ aâ™s memoir explores the complex issues of immigration and assimilation. JosÁ© OrduÁ a chronicles the process of becoming a North American citizen in a post-9/11 United States. Intractable realitiesâ”rooted in the continuity of US imperialism to globalismâ”form the landscape of OrduÁ aâ™s daily experience, where the geopolitical meets the quotidian. In one anecdote, he recalls how the only apartment his parents could rent was one that didnâ™t require signing a lease or running a credit check, where the floors were so crooked he once dropped an orange and watched it roll in six directions before settling in a corner. OrduÁ a describes the absurd feeling of being handed a piece of paperâ”his naturalization certificateâ”that guarantees something he has always known: he has every right to be here. A trenchant exploration of race, class, and identity, *The Weight of Shadows* is a searing meditation on the nature of political, linguistic, and cultural borders, and the meaning of â œAmerica.â •

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

The USA definitely needs reasonable, respectful discussions on immigration reform, but this book does not provide them. I eagerly anticipated reading it, since immigration deserves serious dialogue (the World Economic Forum considers refugee flow the #1 global concern). By way of credentials, Iâ™ve worked with overseas refugee/ immigrant communities and am a primary clinician at a health center with a new program dedicated to refugees. We care! This book is at one extreme of a spectrum. Here's its essence: "Thereâ™s no humane or ethical way to deny people who live in

countries riddled with violence, poverty, and corruption the right to try to make a livable life in
â ^yourâ ™ affluent country, much less so when â ^yourâ ™ countryâ ™s government has been
deeply involved in creating the conditions being fled.â • p.199 in my edition. This is a false
dichotomy â “ supporting the humanity of those who seek to enter the US does not mean supporting
an automatic entitlement to enter and stay at will. The argument also provides a false cause --
although the US government has given plenty of people (including citizens) varying degrees of a
hard time up to and including death, to hubristically say this is the dominant cause of all the
worldâ ™s vastly complex, multifactorial problems is to oversimplify far beyond usefulness, and will
deeply obscure an ongoing search for a decent, reasonable solution. The book's main points are
overcome by an intensely negative, shallow, emotional onslaught against the authorâ ™s adopted
home. Indeed, it deserves two stars because it helps us understand an immigrant who despises the
country they adopted (a valuable perspective, given recent events in Belgium).

As a legal immigrant myself (I moved here from Europe in the mid-80s), I am strongly in favor of an
increase in legal migration. For one, we are terribly short on highly skilled labor. If you ask
businesses in general what their toughest challenges are, hiring skilled employees is almost always
at or near the top. I say all this because when I picked up this book, I admittedly knew not a whole
lot about it, other than that it dealt with "migration and displacement". Once the book arrived and I
started reading, I knew I was in trouble pretty quickly. The book is written by a Mexican who came to
this country as a two year old with his "undocumented" parents but who eventually was able to
move over to legal status and in fact is now a US citizen. Good for him! One might think that there
would be some measure of gratitude and appreciation on the part of the author, but you might be
wrong. On the contrary, the book can be viewed as a 240 page rant about illegal immigration.
Indeed, the author feels "anger and resentment toward a punitive and racist government regarding
its treatment of undocumented immigrants". Yes, you read right: the Obama administration is in the
eyes of this author "punitive and racist". But wait! there is more! A good part of the book is devoted
to his eventual obtaining US citizenship, which leads the author to reflect about the "absurdity" of
getting a certificate for something he has "always" known: "I have a right to be here". Yes, you read
right. The author states it as a matter of fact: all illegal immigrants have a "right" to be in the US.
Never mind that of course US citizens don't have a right to be in Mexico or any other country without
the proper visa or other paper work.

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