

man, a man who was full of contradictions, a man who was so right, and, in some ways, so wrong about the nature of the times we are living in. As such, this book quite sufficiently fulfills its goal, which is, according to Jan Willem Stutje's preface, ". . . to explore frankly and freely the life and work of Ernest Mandel, a Flemish revolutionary Marxist with whose ideas I feel a close affinity" (*Preface*, xv). Stutje fulfills well indeed the goal he set out for himself. It is perhaps the book's harmonious balance between historical and political preciseness with a meticulously detailed account of Mandel's life that makes this an invaluable and stimulating work. This is a clear, concise, and riveting account of one of the most dynamic political figures in world history. This book should not only be read by a new generation of Marxists, economists, sociologists, and economic historians. It should also be read by a new generation of young people who refuse to give up hope in the future of our species and in the possibility of changing the world we live in.

Anthony Fontana-Modesto is a freelance journalist who writes on leftist and socialist history and currents. He is a researcher at the Labor Policy Institute of Brooklyn College Graduate Center for Worker Education. He recently completed a manuscript on the Bolivarian experiment in participatory democracy in Venezuela. Address correspondence to A. Fontana-Modesto, Brooklyn College, City University of New York, 25 Broadway, 7th Floor, New York, New York 10004. Email: afmodesto@yahoo.com. Telephone: +011-212-966-4014.

Sen, Rinku with Mamdouh, Fekkak. *The Accidental American: Immigration and Citizenship in the Age of Globalization*. San Francisco, CA: Berrett-Koehler Publishers, 2008. 248 pp. US\$24.95 (hardcover).

In the days after September 11, 2001, a panic-ridden city rounded up the usual suspects. Those not here legally were looked at with suspicion. A pizza delivery guy in my neighborhood who had come from Egypt and lived here for two decades was arrested, taken away from his family to be questioned. Undocumented immigrants were detained, many without access to lawyers or information about the charges against them. Although the legal principal of habeas corpus has been around since the Magna Carta of 1215, the U.S. government saw fit to do away with it after 9/11. The effort to detain suspected immigrants was the beginning of a policy shift toward the criminalization rather than amnesty for undocumented immigrants in the U.S. Over the next decade, this policy shift impacted immigrants and undocumented workers in countless ways, often separating them from their families and communities. Yet, as Rinku Sen and Fekkak Mamdouh highlight in *The Accidental American*, many fought back.

On January 26, 2002, a group of activists and civil libertarians, including attorney Norm Siegel, converged for a picket at the Metropolitan Detention, Sunset Park in Brooklyn. "Tell us the charges!" and "Who is being held" read

their signs. The protest addressed the round-up of immigrants, many held without charges or access to lawyers after the terrorist attacks the previous fall. On April 10, 2006, half a million activists clogged the streets of downtown Los Angeles, calling for dignity and human rights for immigrants. The sitting mayor addressed the crowd, insisting that “no one is illegal.” That year, 195,024 immigrants were deported and the *New York Times* reported that the prison business stood to profit if immigration “reform” determined that more immigrants could be held indefinitely.

On May 1, 2007, the Los Angeles Police Department fired pepper spray on a May Day rally for workers and immigrants the following spring. Police Commissioner was later forced to apologize in order to keep his job.

On November 4, 2008, a group of activists were arrested at the entrances of the Immigrant Customs Enforcement (ICE) building in San Francisco. The goal of their action was to stop the ICE raids. That year, some 349,041 immigrants, nearly double that of the previous year, were departed as result of the policy. Activists argued that the policy violated the basic human rights of those detained, separating families and leaving children in limbo, some in dangerous private detention centers, isolated from lawyers, family, or community support.

On January 31, 2009, a controversy over the treatments of inmates awaiting deportation from a private prison, the Reeves County Detention Facility in West, Texas, sparked a riot when prisoners asked for medical attention. The inmate was dying.

On March 7, 2009, Rev. Billy and the Life after Shopping Gospel Choir sang, “We Dance the Day You Are Free” outside the Varick Street Special Processing Center, holding immigrants detained during the raids. “The building is a detention center of the ICE, Immigrant Correction Enforcement, an Orwellian development from 9/11 and the torture years of Bush Cheney. But here in our special city, New York,” the rev sermonized. “We have to stop beating people up in the name of 9/11,” he screamed, his face turning red.

Standing in front of the innocuous-looking building, onlookers decried the use of private detention centers and the profit motive behind the ongoing arrests and indefinite incarcerations.

On May 2, 2009, opponents of immigration reform charged that immigrants carry disease and spread swine flu as an argument against policy reform.

On May 6, 2009, immigrant advocates staged an act of civil disobedience over the deportation of family members at the ICE building in Bloomington, Illinois. The action was in response to the ongoing raids, imprisonment, and deportations and violations of the human rights among those detained, many documented in Amnesty International’s report “*Failed without Justice: Immigration Detention in the USA.*” The action was not unprecedented. Similar actions, in addition to hunger strikes, have been held in San Francisco, Los Angeles, and New York earlier in the year. All were organized with the goal of ending the raids and deportations.

Gradually, states embraced more extreme solutions to the competing demands of the immigration policy gap. By April of 2010, the state of Arizona

passed a draconian law, SB 1070, giving way for law enforcement to stop and ask for papers for anyone they suspected of being undocumented. Calls for boycotts started almost immediately. Mayday rallies the following month condemned the measure and called for solidarity among immigrants and workers.

Such are the sites and sounds of the post-9/11 immigration debate, the latest chapter in a generations-old controversy over the rightful place of immigrants in the U.S. As these flashpoints suggest, the topic increasingly eludes a public consensus. In its void, a new generation of Know Nothings scream; stopgap policies including raids, deportations, and a Berlin-like wall along the U.S.–Mexico border ignite emotions without grappling with the complexity of the situation. “It’s the criminalization of immigrants,” explains Alfredo Gonzales, a Latino studies professor at NYU, in the *Independent*. While advocates hope for a program that includes a practical route toward citizenship for undocumented workers, opponents push to demonize those hoping to do what immigrants coming to this country have accomplished since the colonial era. Caught in the middle are undocumented workers doing the heavy lifting.

One way to situate this unfortunate turn in U.S. immigration policy is to read *The Accidental American* by Rinku Sen and organizer Fekkak Mamdouh. The book contributes to an already expanding body of literature on immigration, migration, and labor including *Illegal People: How Globalization Creates Migration and Criminalizes Immigrants* by David Beacon and *Escape Routes: Control and Subversion in the 21st Century* by Dimitris Papadopoulos, Niamh Stephenson, and Vassilis Tsianos. All deal with the complicated interplay between globalization of commerce, migration of bodies, and the ever increasing imperative of workers to organize to protect their own interests, whether in a union or not. While immigrants have long been viewed as a source of flexible labor, today, transnational workers face an array of barriers. Obstacles range from the demonization of those without their papers to a neoliberal turn in global labor markets, rapidly altering the very nature of work. “Neoliberalism refers to an ideology that advocates expanding global free trade and competition and withdrawing the state from regulating economic activity; the result is the deregulation of basic living standards among the poor and working class,” notes Immanuel Ness in *Immigrants, Unions, and the New US Labor Market* (2) an ethnography about the Green Grocer workers in New York City. Faced with ever decreasing wages in a global race to the bottom in terms of labor standards, workers are forced to leave their homes in search of work. When they arrive here, many are viewed as threats. Faced with these challenges, immigrant workers are doing what they have always done. Instead of perish, they are getting organized.

Enter Mamdouh Fekkak, the subject of *The Accidental American* who was one such worker at Windows on the World, a restaurant lost to the 2001 terrorist attacks in NY. Mamdouh Fekkak is the co-founder of Restaurant Opportunities Center of New York (ROC-NY) and co-director of Restaurant Opportunities Center United, the country’s first national restaurant worker organization. Rinku Sen is president and executive director of the Applied Research Center

and the publisher of ColorLines magazine. She is the author of *Stir It Up: Lessons in Community Organizing and Advocacy*, a popular and pulsing work on organizing methods, theory, and practice. As a follow-up to *Stir It Up*, Sen set her eyes on organizing among vulnerable populations taking place in the U.S. after 9/11, her focus, immigrant workers, many undocumented, who lost their jobs after the Windows on the World Restaurant perished. “The government treated the situation as a temporary emergency, but what Windows workers really wanted was a political shift,” explains Sen in the work’s second chapter, “US and them after 9/11.” “[T]he occasional job training or cash assistance would make no long-term difference in their unstable lives.” Rather than therapy or short-term solutions, what these unemployed workers needed were “jobs, housing, health care, and legalization—these were needs that therapy and pills couldn’t meet” (42–3).

Through *The Accidental American*, Sen traces the stories of workers including Fekkak Mamdouh. Without a job, Mamdouh was forced to grapple with an anti-immigrant sentiment that gripped the country after the attacks. “US history is full of attempts to exclude people who did not seem at the time to the image of a ‘real American,’” writes Sen (51). “[T]he treatment of immigrants has always been racialized,” Sen elaborates, highlighting a key theme of post-9/11 political culture, as race and otherness overlap into an anti-immigrant, anti-terror panic. “Over the years racial hierarchies have shifted and racialized definitions changed as European immigrants gained status while Mexican and Third World immigrants did not” (51). After 9/11, immigrants who had once been welcomed were viewed with suspicion and hostility. Facing increasing hostilities, Mamdouh did what people often do when pushed into a corner. He pushed back, organizing to form ROC-NY. The organization’s aim was to assist immigrant workers and fight for work, civil liberties, and dignity as human beings, and they did it by building a network of those affected by both the loss of their jobs after 9/11. Here, ROC-NY helped immigrant and native-born workers find common cause around the conditions of their labor. Since it was founded in 2002, it has won a number of campaigns against restaurant corporations totaling some US\$4.5 in back wages for and discrimination payments for immigrant workers, all while helping a group of workers to start a cooperative restaurant. Today, ROC has built a membership base of some 2,000 workers, and in so doing, ROC-NY has become a model.

Throughout *The Accidental American*, Sen points us to the inner workers of a campaign of those pushed to the edge of history and the global economy. Squeezed by global factors ranging from neoliberalism to the war on terror, she highlights the stories of how workers organize to find a place for themselves to work and thrive. Along the way, Mamdouh comes to see himself following in the tradition of Cesar Chavez. Yet, instead of championing the farm workers as the National Farm Worker Association once did, Mamdouh helped organize a group of immigrant workers in the restaurant industry. Grappling with both economic marginalization and social stigma, the similarities between the groups are many.

In highlighting their stories, Sen frames a discussion on the limitations of current approaches to immigration policy and the hysteria that often accompanies it. She acknowledges some of the charges against immigrants hold a grain of truth—many are undocumented. “Others are patently false,” notes Sen (66). “Immigration law was discriminatorily created and applied; wages are driven down largely because the United States won’t enforce its own labor laws; immigrants, even the vast majority of undocumented immigrants, do pay taxes. And there has been no sign that restricting immigration will have any effect on preventing terrorism,” (66) (for a useful overview of the lack of enforcement of U.S. labor laws around exploitation of migrant workers, see “In Strawberry Fields,” a chapter in Eric Schlosser’s 2003 *Reefer Madness: Sex, Drugs, and Cheap Labor in the American Black Market*).

Sen and Mamdouh call for a more coherent, human rights-based approach to reform of U.S. immigration policy. In this way, bodies move across borders as freely as ideas as possibilities, benefiting both workers and the demand for labor. Most of all, this alternative policy approach is based on the lessons of the organizing experience of immigrant workers. Through Mamdouh’s story, we witness a redemptive narrative of labor of immigration and citizenship. Every person has dignity, yet people gain power when they organize and collectively push U.S. public opinion and politicians to incorporate their perspectives. This only comes through creativity and action. Faced with a vexing challenge, Mamdouh organized himself out of a corner for a common good. Through Mamdouh’s story, Sen highlights the innovative organizing born of the post-9/11 immigrant debate. The response to this ugly moment points to a way out our current impasse.

Benjamin Shepard, PhD, is Assistant Professor of Human Service at New York School of Technology/City University of New York. As a social worker, he worked in AIDS housing settings from San Francisco to Chicago to New York, where he directed the start ups for two congregate housing programs for people with HIV/AIDS. He is author of *Queer Political Performance and Protest* (Routledge 2009); *White Nights and Ascending Shadows: An Oral History of the San Francisco AIDS Epidemic* (Cassell 1997) among many other books, articles and chapters. Address correspondence to Benjamin H. Shepard, City Tech/CUNY, 300 Jay Street N-401, Brooklyn, NY 11201. Telephone: +011-718-260-5135. E-mail: bshepard@citytech.cuny.edu.

Seniors, Paula Marie. *Beyond Lift Every Voice and Sing: The Culture of Uplift, Identity, and Politics in Black Musical Theater*. Columbus: The Ohio State University Press, 2009. 368 pp. \$54.95 (hardcover).

Treading along the path blazed by David Krasner in *Resistance, Parody, and Double Consciousness*, the award-winning study of African-American theater