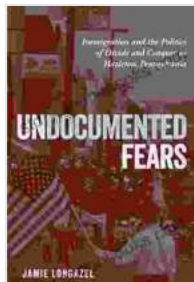


The Politics of Divide and Conquer: Immigration in Hazleton, Pennsylvania



Undocumented Fears: Immigration and the Politics of Divide and Conquer in Hazleton, Pennsylvania

★★★★☆ 4.4 out of 5

Language : English
File size : 1620 KB
Text-to-Speech : Enabled
Screen Reader : Supported
Enhanced typesetting : Enabled
Word Wise : Enabled
Print length : 226 pages

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Hazleton, Pennsylvania, a once-thriving coal mining town, has in recent decades become a microcosm of the complex and divisive politics surrounding immigration in the United States. The arrival of a large number of undocumented Latino immigrants in the early 2000s sparked a bitter backlash among some residents, leading to a series of controversial and discriminatory policies and a deep divide within the community.

The Influx of Immigrants

Hazleton's population had declined steadily since the collapse of the coal industry in the 1950s. In the early 2000s, the town began to experience an influx of undocumented Latino immigrants, primarily from Mexico and Guatemala. These immigrants were drawn to Hazleton by the availability of low-wage jobs in the service and construction industries.

The sudden increase in the Latino population, which grew from less than 1% in 2000 to over 20% by 2006, had a profound impact on Hazleton. The immigrants brought with them a different language, culture, and set of values, which some residents found threatening.

The Rise of Anti-Immigration Sentiment

As the number of Latino immigrants in Hazleton grew, so too did the anti-immigration sentiment among some residents. This sentiment was fueled by a number of factors, including fear of economic competition, concerns about crime and public safety, and a sense of cultural displacement.

In 2006, Lou Barletta, a local Republican politician, tapped into this anti-immigration sentiment and ran for mayor on a platform of reducing illegal

immigration. Barletta's campaign was marked by inflammatory rhetoric that scapegoated immigrants for the town's problems.

The City's Response

Under Barletta's leadership, the city of Hazleton adopted a series of controversial policies aimed at deterring undocumented immigrants from settling in the town. These policies included:

- An ordinance requiring businesses to verify the immigration status of employees
- A "no-renting" ordinance that prohibited landlords from renting to undocumented immigrants
- A "sanctuary city" resolution that declared Hazleton to be a place where undocumented immigrants would not be protected from deportation

The Impact on the Community

The city's anti-immigration policies had a devastating impact on the Latino community in Hazleton. Many immigrants lost their jobs, homes, and access to essential services. The community was also subjected to harassment and intimidation by some residents.

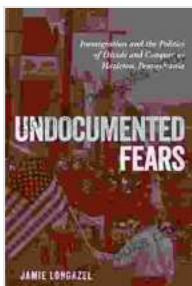
The divide between pro- and anti-immigration residents deepened, and the town became a symbol of the bitter debate over immigration that is tearing apart communities across the United States.

The Road to Reconciliation

In recent years, there have been some signs of reconciliation in Hazleton. In 2011, the city council repealed the "no-renting" ordinance after it was ruled unconstitutional by the courts. And in 2014, Lou Barletta was voted out of office.

However, the legacy of the anti-immigration backlash in Hazleton continues to linger. Many Latino immigrants remain afraid to come out of the shadows, and the community remains divided.

The story of Hazleton, Pennsylvania, is a cautionary tale about the dangers of divisive politics and scapegoating. When we allow fear and prejudice to divide us, we all suffer. The path to a more just and equitable society lies in finding ways to bridge the gaps between us and to recognize the humanity in all people.



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