Susana Hernandez, Ryan Evely Gildersleeve, The Review of Higher Education, Volume 36, Number 3, Spring 2013: "Prominent legal scholar Michael Olivas provides a detailed account of what is arguably one of the most important U.S. Supreme Court cases related to education, Plyler v. Doe in his most recent book, No Undocumented Child Left Behind: Plyler v. Doe and the Education of Undocumented Schoolchildren. The Plyler case settled whether the state of Texas could enact laws that denied undocumented children free access to public schools. The Court struck down a state statute denying funding for education to undocumented children and a school district’s attempt to charge an annual $1,000 tuition fee for each undocumented schoolchild enrolled in public school to compensate for the lost state funding.

However, Olivas contends that the case did much more. He argues that the Plyler case has come to represent how society will treat immigrant children. As a result, this book stands as one of the best resources for understanding one of the most controversial political concerns of the day.

In this five-chapter book, Olivas opens with contextualizing the Plyler case, the political landscape of Texas generally, and the Houston area specifically, where the legal saga began. Olivas describes the litigation and key players in the case in great detail. He depicts the local and national polity surrounding the case, capturing how the case was managed and the strategic decisions made to ensure that the case could garner stronger provisions. Prior to Plyler, the Supreme Court had not considered whether people without documentation could seek equal protection under the Fourteenth Amendment, and Olivas provides a comprehensive description of the litigation leading to the central issue in this book.

In Chapter 3, Olivas broadens the scope beyond Texas and undocumented school children, explaining how discussions about immigration reform turn into discussions about border security, terrorism, and the economy. The implementation of Plyler v. Doe is the central theme of this chapter, and Olivas provides a historical account of the direct and indirect challenges not only to this case, but to other state and federal legislative efforts to overturn the protections that the Plyler case was able to ensure.
'Doe Goes to College' is the subtitle of Chapter 4, in which Olivas focuses on the political economy of the proposed federal legislation, the Development, Relief, and Education for Alien Minors (DREAM) Act. This chapter also provides extensive background on the litigation and legal developments of state-level policies related to issues of state residency and college tuition.

The concluding chapter begins with a candid description of Michael Olivas' involvement in residency reform dating back to his graduate school studies at The Ohio State University. He concludes the chapter and the book by challenging the restrictionist perspectives documented in the book, and acknowledges the current highly polarized debate about immigration that is often held captive by partisan politics. Olivas maintains that even 30 years after the Plyler v. Doe decision, enforcing its ruling continues to warrant vigilance in light of the national discourse around immigration and restrictionist policies such as those recently enacted in Arizona and Georgia. He contends that, until Congress acts to provide comprehensive immigration reform with realistic and efficient provisions, the treatment of undocumented children will continue to be litigated and challenged.

As a leading scholar on immigrant education, Olivas provides informed and insightful commentary on the complex nature of immigration, education, and the collision of these two highly charged issues. This book serves as a valuable resource for anyone interested in undocumented students, educational policy, and/or residency. Olivas' ability to describe litigation cases in un-pretentious legal terms is notable. His ability to chronicle the nuanced nature of legal proceedings while recounting a broader social narrative that extends beyond residency makes this volume an integral contribution to the increasingly significant canon of literature about undocumented students."

Posted by

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