



Against the Tide: Immigrants, Day Laborers, and Community in Jupiter, Florida

Sandra Lazo de la Vega, Timothy J. Steigenga

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Across the United States, the issue of immigration has generated rancorous debate and divided communities. Many states and municipalities have passed restrictive legislation that erodes any sense of community.

Against the Tide tells the story of Jupiter, Florida, a coastal town of approximately 50,000 that has taken a different path.

At the beginning of the twenty-first century, Jupiter was in the throes of immigration debates. A decade earlier, this small town had experienced an influx of migrants from Mexico and Guatemala. Immigrants seeking work gathered daily on one of the city's main streets, creating an ad-hoc, open-air labor market that generated complaints and health and human safety concerns. What began as a local debate rapidly escalated as Jupiter's situation was thrust into the media spotlight and attracted the attention of state and national anti-immigrant groups. But then something unexpected happened: immigrants, neighborhood residents, university faculty and students, and town representatives joined together to mediate community tensions and successfully moved the informal labor market to the new El Sol Neighborhood Resource Center.

Timothy J. Steigenga, who helped found the center, and Lazo de la Vega, who organized students in support of its mission, describe how El Sol engaged the residents of Jupiter in a two-way process of immigrant integration and helped build trust on both sides. By examining one city's search for a positive public policy solution, *Against the Tide* offers valuable practical lessons for other communities confronting similar challenges.



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