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The Price Of Rights: Regulating International Labor Migration



Synopsis

Many low-income countries and development organizations are calling for greater liberalization of labor immigration policies in high-income countries. At the same time, human rights organizations and migrant rights advocates demand more equal rights for migrant workers. *The Price of Rights* shows why you cannot always have both. Examining labor immigration policies in over forty countries, as well as policy drivers in major migrant-receiving and migrant-sending states, Martin Ruhs finds that there are trade-offs in the policies of high-income countries between openness to admitting migrant workers and some of the rights granted to migrants after admission. Insisting on greater equality of rights for migrant workers can come at the price of more restrictive admission policies, especially for lower-skilled workers. Ruhs advocates the liberalization of international labor migration through temporary migration programs that protect a universal set of core rights and account for the interests of nation-states by restricting a few specific rights that create net costs for receiving countries. *The Price of Rights* analyzes how high-income countries restrict the rights of migrant workers as part of their labor immigration policies and discusses the implications for global debates about regulating labor migration and protecting migrants. It comprehensively looks at the tensions between human rights and citizenship rights, the agency and interests of migrants and states, and the determinants and ethics of labor immigration policy.

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Customer Reviews

Excerpt from a review on The Migrationist -Martin Ruhs, lecturer in political economy at the

University of Oxford argues for the middle ground between state interests and immigrant rights. To be clear: Ruhs is not anti-immigrant, nor anti-immigrant rights. Rather, he argues "for a pragmatic approach that is both realistic and idealist" (20). He asserts "...we cannot hope to close the gap between human rights... and migrant rights in practice unless we understand as well as account for the reasons why nation-states grant and restrict certain rights" (16). Ruhs' work focuses on the space between the rights of the individual and the interests of the state; the careful balance between maintaining rights and enabling access to the economic market. Immigration policy decisions, according to Ruhs, are made with four sets of constraints in mind: i) domestic and international legal constraints ii) the capacity to control immigration iii) domestic institutional factors (such as the welfare state) and iv) labor market structures. Ruhs describes the trade-offs between these factors and immigrant rights. Importantly, his analysis "...shows that among programs in upper-high-income countries, labor immigration programs can be characterized by a trade-off between openness and some migrant rights..." in the receiving country (19). Ruhs finds that a high degree of openness to migrants in the receiving country results in more restricted rights once in the country. Despite this, migrant workers continue to make the choice to emigrate and make this trade-off between their rights and economic opportunity.

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