

Democracy for All: Restoring Immigrant Voting Rights in the United States by Ron Hayduk. New York, Routledge, 2006. 264 pp. Cloth, \$95.00; paper, \$24.95.

In February of 1992, Takoma Park, Maryland, a Montgomery County suburb of Washington DC with a population of less than eighteen thousand, attracted national attention by allowing non-citizens, documented and undocumented, to vote in its local elections. What the public and many scholars probably do not realize is that for various periods during the nineteenth century, thirty-seven American states or territories included aliens in their electorates, and that today, forty-five countries allow at least some immigrants to vote in some elections. This book by Ron Hayduk, co-director of the Immigrant Voting Project, is the most comprehensive survey on the subject of immigrant suffrage in the United States, an issue that has been revived as the proportion of

immigrants has grown since 1970 and the battles over immigrant rights have correspondingly escalated.

Fervently supporting non-citizen voting, especially in local elections, but nonetheless fully cataloguing the arguments on all sides, *Democracy for All* focuses on local campaigns for non-citizen suffrage in New York (in which Hayduk was a very active participant), San Francisco, and the District of Columbia, and much more briefly treats struggles in other cities and a few states. Based on obscure local records, interviews, policy papers, and newspaper articles, these interesting narratives comprise over half of the book.

Students of social movements, state and local governments, or public policy will fasten onto the discussions of strategies, tactics, and coalitions: How broad should proposals for non-citizen suffrage be? In particular, should the undocumented be included and should the vote be confined to school elections? Should the struggle for the ballot be integrated into larger campaigns for immigrant rights or kept separate from them? How should advocates approach state legislators, whose support is often needed to authorize local actions? How rapidly should suffrage expansion be pushed? For opponents of immigrant voting, the principal calculation is whether opposition will alienate voters from the immigrants' ethnic groups.

In the semi-decentralized American political system, in an age of easy transmission of information, actions on election laws are mostly local, but the arguments for and against changes are the same everywhere. Proponents of immigrant suffrage observe that because of complicated rules and understaffed agencies, naturalization often takes as long as a decade. They believe that those who are affected by public policy, particularly in regard to public schools, should be able to protect their interests by participating in the choice of policymakers. They conclude that prospective citizens should not have to wait to be able to influence decisions that may crucially impact them and their children, and they speculate that political participation will help assimilate newcomers into the community. In response, opponents of non-citizen voting, largely ignoring history, particularly the experiences with suffrage rights of African Americans, women, and many past immigrants, maintain that enfranchisement is by definition an attribute of citizenship, and they speculate that immigrants are insufficiently assimilated and too ignorant about American politics to vote in the best interests of the country. It follows, opponents assert, that it would be wrong in itself and bad for the political system in general if non-citizens voted. Both sides agree that immigrants would lean liberal and Democratic, and partisan/ideological motives are often visible in the debates.

Whatever the arguments, recent efforts to enfranchise immigrants have been unsuccessful, except in Takoma Park, where the expansion was led by Jamin Raskin, the leading scholarly proponent of non-citizen suffrage, on whose work Hayduk heavily relies. Although Hayduk is steadfastly optimistic, his study belies his hopes. The past of immigrant suffrage in the United States,

a topic insufficiently studied by historians and skimmed over by Hayduk, may be more interesting than its seemingly bleak future.

J. MORGAN KOUSSER
California Institute of Technology