



Working in the Shadows: A Year of Doing the Jobs (Most) Americans Won't Do

By Gabriel Thompson

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What is it like to do the back-breaking work of immigrants? To find out, Gabriel Thompson spent a year working alongside Latino immigrants, who initially thought he was either crazy or an undercover immigration agent. He stooped over lettuce fields in Arizona, and worked the graveyard shift at a chicken slaughterhouse in rural Alabama. He dodged taxis—not always successfully—as a bicycle delivery “boy” for an upscale Manhattan restaurant, and was fired from a flower shop by a boss who, he quickly realized, was nuts.

As one coworker explained, “These jobs make you old quick.” Back spasms occasionally keep Thompson in bed, where he suffers recurring nightmares involving iceberg lettuce and chicken carcasses. Combining personal narrative with investigative reporting, Thompson shines a bright light on the underside of the American economy, exposing harsh working conditions, union busting, and lax government enforcement—while telling the stories of workers, undocumented immigrants, and desperate US citizens alike, forced to live with chronic pain in the pursuit of 8 an hour.

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

Thompson (*There's No José Here*) details working alongside undocumented workers in this stirring look at the bottom rung of America's economic ladder. Thompson's project feels initially like a gimmick; that this middle-class white American can go undercover in the lettuce fields of Arizona or the poultry plants of Alabama seems more stunt (or rehash of Barbara Ehrenreich's *Nickel and Dimed*) than sound journalism. But the warmth with which he describes his co-workers and the heartbreaking descriptions of the demanding, degrading, and low-paying jobs quickly pull the reader in. Gimmick or no, the author pushes his body and his patience to the limits, all the while deferring attention to the true heroes: his co-workers, whose dignity, perseverance, physical endurance, and manual skill are no less admirable for being born of sheer necessity. What emerges are not tales of downtrodden migrants but of clever hands and clever minds forced into repetitive and dangerous labor without legal protections. Thompson excels at putting a human face on individuals and situations alternately ignored and vilified. (*Feb.*)

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From [Booklist](#)

In a yearlong investigation, journalist Thompson lived among and worked side by side with undocumented workers in the hardest, lowest-paying jobs offered by the U.S. economy. He went west to pick lettuce, south to work in a chicken-processing factory, and back home to New York to work in a restaurant kitchen. Along the way, he shared the low wages, backbreaking work, ill treatment, and camaraderie of people who work in the shadows. In Arizona, he recalls desperately trying to make the five-day rule: if you can survive the first five days as a farmworker, you will be fine, meaning you will get used to swollen hands and all-over aches and pains for \$8 an hour. In Alabama, he finds the local white supremacists have updated their targets to Hispanic workers and documented workers beginning to challenge exploitive labor practices. In New York, he chronicles workers with so few prospects that they work multiple jobs with no benefits. This is great immersion journalism that debunks myths about immigrants taking American jobs and living off American largesse. --Vanessa Bush

About the Author

Gabriel Thompson writes for *New York* magazine, *The Nation*, the *Brooklyn Rail*, and *In These Times*. The author of *There's No José Here*, he lives in Brooklyn, New York.

Users Review

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Erica Rawlins:

The book Working in the Shadows: A Year of Doing the Jobs (Most) Americans Won't Do will bring that you the new experience of reading any book. The author style to describe the idea is very unique. Should you try to find new book to see, this book very suited to you. The book Working in the Shadows: A Year of Doing the Jobs (Most) Americans Won't Do is much recommended to you to read. You can also get the e-book in the official web site, so you can quickly to read the book.

Paul Frazier:

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Gayle Meek:

Playing with family in a park, coming to see the water world or hanging out with good friends is thing that usually you may have done when you have spare time, then why you don't try thing that really opposite from that. A single activity that make you not experience tired but still relaxing, trilling like on roller coaster you are ride on and with addition associated with. Even you love Working in the Shadows: A Year of Doing the Jobs (Most) Americans Won't Do, it is possible to enjoy both. It is good combination right, you still desire to miss it? What kind of hangout type is it? Oh can occur its mind hangout folks. What? Still don't obtain it, oh come on its called reading friends.

Adam Tonn:

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