

Dear America: Notes of an Undocumented Citizen by Jose Antonio Vargas [2018] is an autobiographical account of how impossible it is for a foreign-born and undocumented person to become a US citizen today. Even though Vargas is a Pulitzer prize-winning journalist employed by some of the country's most prestigious newspapers, he remains despite years of efforts "*the most famous undocumented immigrant in America*".

As he puts it, "*After 25 years of living illegally in a country that does not consider me one of its own, this book is the closest thing I have to freedom.*" I confess I would not have been able to comprehend his position if I had not participated in the League of Women Voters three presentations this fall on the Myths of Immigration. Like many, I assumed 'getting in line', getting an education, and getting a job were all viable options for most people seeking citizenship. Not true.

A startling graphic handed out to us by Pisgah Legal pinpointed what Vargas is telling us here. We see that most options are actually dead ends, leaving people like him, who was brought here as a child from the Philippines, with no path forward. His mother, seeking a better life for her son, paid someone to bring him to America to live with her relatives, but to no avail.

Some of our LWV colleagues heard Vargas speak in Asheville and his witness to our Immigration Quicksand has educated and inspired us to continue to work for solutions to this intractable, embarrassing and anti-moral problem for our beloved country. No one says it better than Vargas himself:

*This is not a book about the politics of immigration. This book--at its core--is not about immigration at all. This book is about homelessness, not in a traditional sense, but in the unsettled, unmoored psychological state that undocumented immigrants like myself find ourselves in. This book is about lying and being forced to lie to get by; about passing as an American and as a contributing citizen; about families, keeping them together, and having to make new ones when you can't. This book is about constantly hiding from the government and, in the process, hiding from ourselves. This book is about what it means to not have a home.*

LWV Book Review by Aloha L. Smith+