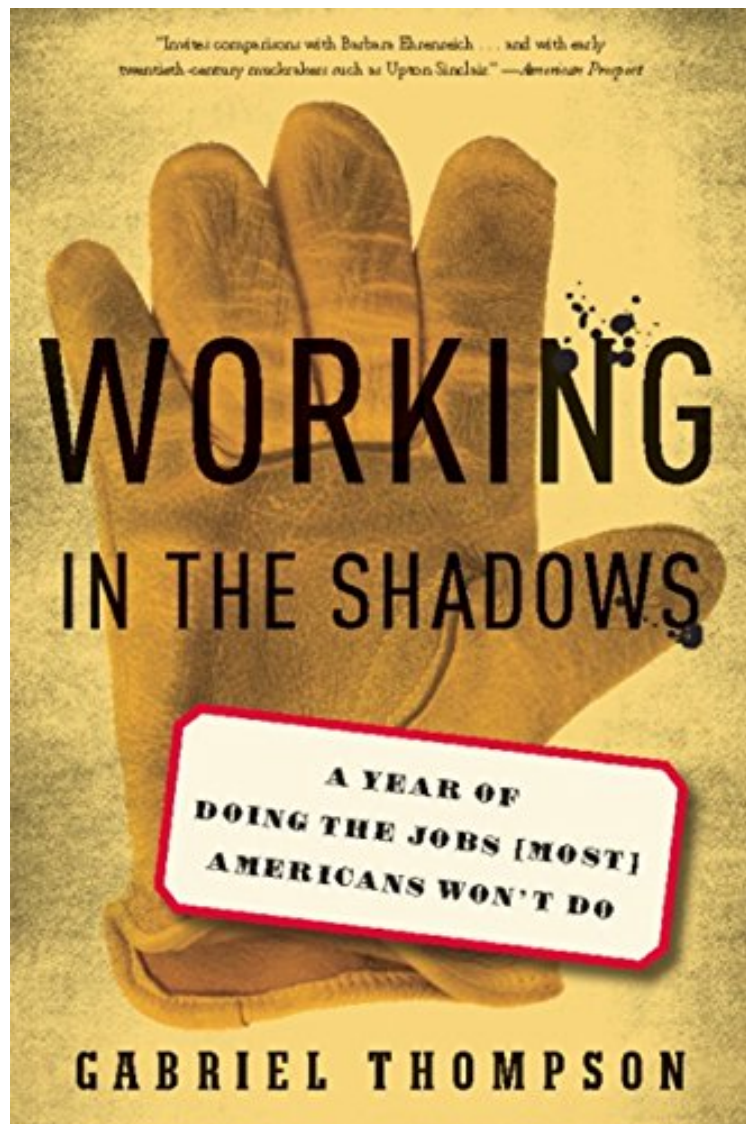


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## Working in the Shadows: A Year of Doing the Jobs (Most) Americans Won't Do

*Gabriel Thompson*

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**Gabriel Thompson : Working in the Shadows: A Year of Doing the Jobs (Most) Americans Won't Do** before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Working in the Shadows: A Year of Doing the Jobs (Most) Americans Won't Do:

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. One of the best books I've read in a long time By Susan Anderson One of the best books I've read in a long time. I read it originally as an e book, but ordered a paper copy to share with friends. It is an inside look at the lives of the people in country who faithfully perform the tasks that most

people don't want to do and that we take for granted. 1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Interesting book but skip the conclusion! By S. Block This helped made me to appreciate the work I don't have to do. It was a very interesting look at a day laborer's life - very hard work, often dangerous, with very little pay. I'm glad I read it. However, the problem I have is that the first 95% of the book was honest and unbiased. The last 5% was a political bashing. The author went completely off course and dedicated his final chapter to putting 100% of the blame on "Wall Street" for the last recession and "corporate greed" for all the hardship day laborers face. He then suggests that unions are the answer to the troubles the working man faces. Unfortunately, life isn't that simple, and there are a myriad of reasons why capitalism isn't a perfect economic system and why unions aren't always our savior. There are constructive ways we could improve the poor working guy's life - bashing corporations and "Wall Street" doesn't help. 2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. Interesting read By Philbert I just finished this book and found it an interesting read. I live in an agricultural area, so we have many Hispanic workers both documented, and undocumented. Much of it is back breaking field work, but we also have a vibrant community that provides manufacturing jobs at or above minimum wage. I own two businesses, and except for entry level, I pay above minimum, offer advancement, and health benefits. Tough to do in this economy, but I feel it is good business to take care of my associate family. It also yields a more satisfied and loyal workforce. The weakest parts of the book are some of his conclusions. Unionizing is going to be tough, and may actually hurt in some ways. The author is spot on, however, in stating that we need comprehensive immigration reform. Our economy needs these workers, and they add much to our communities. As he points out in Alabama, they are often an unseen part of the community, and contribute to the overall economy. Overall, I recommend this book. I think you will find it interesting.

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 “boyrdquo; 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.rdqo; 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.

From Publishers Weekly Thompson (*There's No Joseacute; 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.) Copyright copy; Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. 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 Joseacute; Here*, he lives in Brooklyn, New York.