

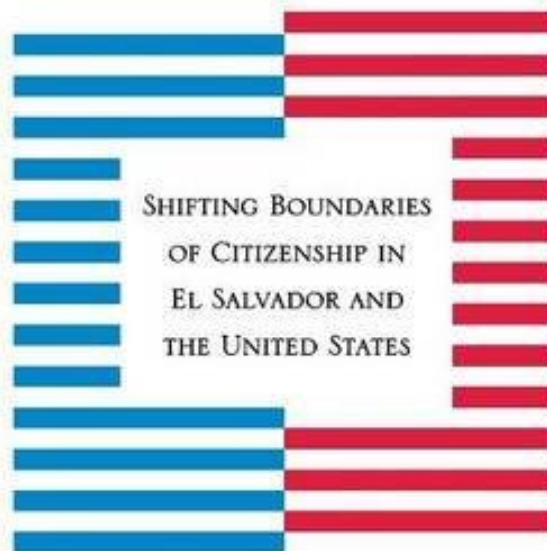
# Nations of Emigrants: Shifting Boundaries of Citizenship in El Salvador and the United States

*Susan Bibler Coutin*

*ebooks | Download PDF | \*ePub | DOC | audiobook*

---

## NATIONS OF EMIGRANTS



SUSAN BIBLER COUTIN

---

 Download

 Read Online

#1896784 in Books Cornell University Press 2007-09-13 Original language: English PDF # 1 8.37 x .67 x 5.791, .82 #File Name: 0801473969288 pages | File size: 58.Mb

**Susan Bibler Coutin : Nations of Emigrants: Shifting Boundaries of Citizenship in El Salvador and the United States** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Nations of Emigrants: Shifting Boundaries of Citizenship in El Salvador and the United States:

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. It is beautifully written and methodologically innovative By gld\_9 Professor Coutin is at the height of her analytical and ethnographic powers in this book. It is beautifully written

and methodologically innovative. 1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Strong ethnography  
By Concoriu  
In this book, Susan Coutin calls both El Salvador and the USA nations of emigrants, and describes the policies, laws and boundaries that shift and move along with their moving and entangling populations. She focuses on the experiences of Salvadorians in the US and in El Salvador, and suggests that our definitions of terms such as nation, immigrant, and citizen set artificial lines in reality. These lines then lead people and nations to fight against what (or who) crosses the line. Coutin looks at government policies in both countries which have excluded Salvadoran emigrants, and at how Salvadorans have both belonged and not belonged to both countries as a result of their emigration (in the context of civil war). When we set up realities in absolute ways, she suggests, then when we recognize one reality, we exclude others. So the nations are formed by disruption, as "nation," "immigrant," and "citizen" become shimmering and multiple realities that imply exclusion of other realities. Our attempts to make social, legal, and political realities match (by deportation, immigration, naturalization) lead to other disjunctures. She structures her ethnography of Salvadorian emigrants to mirror these disjunctures. In the end, she recommends that for more aspects of person and nation to be fully present to each other, people need to be allowed to belong: there needs to be ways that emigrants' legal status can more fully match their social and physical presence. This is a strong ethnography, and worth a read for scholars of citizenship, immigration, and the Americas.

The violence and economic devastation of the 1980-1992 civil war in El Salvador drove as many as one million Salvadorans to enter the United States, frequently without authorization. In *Nations of Emigrants*, the legal anthropologist Susan Bibler Coutin analyzes the case of emigration from El Salvador to the United States to consider how current forms of migration challenge conventional understandings of borders, citizenship, and migration itself. Interviews with policymakers and activists in El Salvador and the United States are juxtaposed with Salvadoran emigrants' accounts of their journeys to the United States, their lives in this country, and, in some cases, their removal to El Salvador. These interviews and accounts illustrate the dilemmas that migration creates for nation-states as well as the difficulties for individuals who must live simultaneously within and outside the legal systems of two countries. During the 1980s, U.S. officials generally regarded these migrants as economic immigrants who deserved to be deported, rather than as political refugees who merited asylum. By the 1990s, these Salvadorans were made eligible for legal permanent residency, at least in part due to the lives that they had created in the United States. Remarkably, this redefinition occurred during a period when more restrictive immigration policies were being adopted by the U.S. government. At the same time, Salvadorans in the United States, who send relatives more than \$3 billion in remittances annually, have become a focus of policymaking in El Salvador and are considered key to its future.

"*Nations of Emigrants* moves beyond studies of the experience of migration and the struggle for citizenship; instead, its aim is to rethink the nation itself. Focusing on El Salvador and the United States, Susan Coutin calls attention to the complex and shifting ways that nations are constituted through the movement of subjects and objects that cannot be fully contained within their borders. . . . Migrants appear not as immigrants who seek to settle and assimilate into a 'different' culture, but rather as emigrants defined by multidirectional movement and residence in multiple spaces simultaneously. This innovative analytical point of departure, buttressed by Coutin's rigorous methodology and original ethnographic approach, provide an important contribution to current studies of nationhood and migration." Monica DeHart, *American Ethnologist*  
"*Nations of Emigrants* is, at the core, a book about juxtapositions, anomalies, disjunctures and ironies revolving around the migration experience. Using the Salvadoran community as a historicized case study, Coutin demystifies many of the misperceptions built around migrant communities as a whole. . . . Ultimately, Coutin advocates for a more nuanced scholarly framework, one that would account for the often unspoken, alternative de facto realities in which emigrants/immigrants find themselves throughout time. . . . This book is an important reflection on both the interstitial social reality of the immigrant and the policies that have been used to define, delimit and clearly confine that social reality." Yolanda C. Martn, *Latino Studies*  
"Powerful and poignant, this important study in legal anthropology traces the twists and turns of Salvadoran migrants' relationship to the United States over the last twenty years as they change from asylum seekers to remittance providers to criminal deportees. As she follows the striking shifts in Salvadoran migrants' legal status, Susan Bibler Coutin brilliantly shows how legality and illegality are not distinct categories. Instead, each contains elements of the other in its logics and practices." Sally Engle Merry, *New York University*  
"I enjoyed *Nations of Emigrants* very much. I like the nonlinear approach Susan Bibler Coutin takes to examine citizenship, immigration, and nation. She weaves flawlessly theory and sharp ethnographic observations while at the same time putting a human face to the conundrums of immigration law. The result is theoretically innovative, methodologically sophisticated, and a truly engaging account. I highly recommend it to anyone interested in contemporary immigration debates and Central American immigration in particular." Cecilia Menjivar, *Arizona State University*  
"*Nations of Emigrants* is the product of Susan Bibler Coutin's longstanding engagement with Salvadoran migrants to the United States—their situation of multiple partial belonging, their vulnerability to political crosswinds in both countries, and their creativity in building communities in the intricate spaces left open by law. Everyone interested in migration will find rich resources here. And anyone interested in how

ethnography rises to the challenges of contemporary sociolegal complexity will find a vivid demonstration of the genre at its best. Coutin's work is compelling, provocative, timely, rigorous, innovative, and deeply felt."Carol J. Greenhouse, Princeton University

"Susan Bibler Coutin has done an excellent job of capturing what it means to be Salvadoran, both in El Salvador and in the United States as well as transnationally. Having grown up Salvadoran in the United States, this book resonated with my personal life experiences; chronicling many of the challenges that my community, friends, family, and I personally have had to face and continue to confront. Throughout the book, the author weaves together different strands of Salvadoran reality in a way that covers vast dimensions of Salvadorans' lived experiences. While she does this through the lens of emigrants' lives and struggles, she does so in a way that connects the Salvadoran experience to issues of relevance to scholars of U.S. foreign policy, comparative politics (revolution and civil war), Latino politics (political incorporation and political engagement), and contentious politics (solidarity and sanctuary movements). . . . Coutin has written a brilliant ethnographic study rich with Salvadorans' personal accounts of their political reality and in their own voices. But the book is also valuable for the insights it offers for the study of other emigrant communities with significant undocumented populations."Hctor Perla, Jr., Political Science Quarterly

"A comprehensive review of the multiple and often contradictory effects of migration between El Salvador and the US . . . Its greatest strength is in synthesizing empirical data, legal histories, and ethnographic portraits."Choice

About the Author Susan Bibler Coutin is Associate Professor in the Department of Criminology, Law, and Society, School of Social Ecology, at the University of California, Irvine. She is the author of *Legalizing Moves: Salvadoran Immigrants' Struggle for U.S. Residency* and *The Culture of Protest: Religious Activism and the U.S. Sanctuary Movement*.