

IMMIGRATION

MYTHS **VS** FACTS

a look behind the anti-immigrant furor



A look behind the anti-immigrant furor

A call to action in support of immigrants' rights.

Immigration was a top issue in last year's elections, and, under the new Trump administration, continues to be so. Immigrants from Mexico, Central America, the Caribbean and elsewhere are working harder and are subjected to wage theft, exploitation and abuses on the job and in the community.

But immigrants and their friends and allies in organized labor and the community are fighting hard for their rights also. They are demanding an end to deportations that rip families apart, and to the long term detention of migrants and refugees. They are insisting on humane and practical solutions that will benefit both immigrants and U.S. workers, including the legalization of undocumented workers through a comprehensive immigration reform.

Most Democratic Party politicians have committed themselves to such a reform. The main obstacle to the attainment of these goals is the Republican Party, now in control of the Executive and Legislative branches of government and poised to name anti-immigrant federal judges. President Trump has attacked Muslims and Mexican people in slanderous and racist terms. He threatens to deport all the 11 million undocumented immigrants estimated to be in this country. He says he will build a wall along the U.S.-Mexico border. He says he will make Mexico pay for it, by threatening to seize the financial help that immigrants send to their impoverished families in the old country or by other means. He has fired up his base by these attacks.

Twenty-six Republican state attorneys general successfully blocked an Obama administration program, DAPA (Deferred Action for Parents of American Citizens and Legal Residents) to give a break to the undocumented parents of U.S. citizen children, due

to decisions by Republican appointed judges and Supreme Court Justices.

In response, millions of new citizens have been registering to vote and getting involved in the political process.

Trump and his ilk have got many people confused on the subject of immigration and its impact on our society, especially on U.S. workers. This pamphlet attempts to refute some of the myths with the facts.

Why are so many immigrants coming to the United States?

- Working people in Mexico, Central America the Caribbean and other parts of the world have been devastated by the practices of U.S. and other big transnational corporations. So called "free" trade treaties like the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) and the Central America-Dominican Republic Free Trade Agreement (CAFTA-DR) are imposed with conditions that prevent poorer countries from meeting their people's needs.
- After NAFTA came into force, more than 1.3 million farmers were driven out of business. CAFTA-DR has had a similar impact in Central America. U.S. agribusiness, subsidized by our tax dollars, has sold grain and other products in the poorer countries at prices below the production costs of their farmers. In the years immediately following NAFTA's inception, Mexican undocumented immigration to the United States rose 60 %, and similar things have happened in other countries linked to these agreements.



- Big corporations in the United States and in other rich countries have been glad to take advantage of the resulting excess of cheap labor, and have sent labor recruiters into economically depressed regions Mexico and Central America.

- On top of this, economic stagnation has led to political instability and a huge increase in violence and crime. This has sent thousands of children and families fleeing from some areas, especially the Central American countries and Caribbean countries of Honduras, El Salvador, Guatemala and Haiti.

- The big corporations and other wealthy interests that exploit workers, both immigrants and non-immigrants, take advantage of this situation to divide the working class and increase their own wealth and power.

- The Trump administration plans to greatly increase the detention of immigrants, even ones who have committed no crime, and will be subcontracting this awful policy to the corrupt private prison industry, which is known for its abusive treatment of prisoners, to do this.

So why don't people in those countries fix their situation at home instead of coming here?

- U.S., Canadian, European and other multinational corporations have put heavy pressure on these poorer countries to keep their economies open to penetration from outside corporations,

- When these countries resist this pressure, the governments of the United States and the other wealthy countries often intervene with threats, bribery, and even military force to stop union and farmer organizing and political change from taking place.

- With this pro-corporate foreign policy, the U.S. has at different times sponsored coups, civil wars and dictators in Haiti, El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras.

My grandparents came from Europe legally. Why can't people from Mexico and these other countries do the same? Why do they butt ahead in line?

- It is not a matter of "butting in line". There is no line for them to get into! The U.S. government issues exceedingly few legal resident visas to displaced farmers and low skilled workers. To get a U.S. permanent resident visa, immigrants are required to present proofs of income and employment that are hard for people fleeing poverty and violence in poor countries to get.

- Even people married to U.S. citizens or permanent legal residents often have to wait years to join their spouses in the United States. This is a different situation from the one many of our grandparents faced.

- The U.S. government is also very stingy in recognizing who is a genuine refugee meriting asylum or not.

- Today it is nearly impossible for people who don't have specialized skills, or close relatives in the U.S., to come at all. The Trump administration is threatening to make it even harder.

Do immigrants cause unemployment?

- There are not a fixed number of jobs in our economy. The truth is

that immigrant workers and their families create jobs at the same rate that they fill them.

- The real causes of unemployment are rooted in the decreasing wages being paid to all workers. Our country's workers can no longer afford to buy the products they produce.

- Immigrant workers are not responsible for the millions of jobs wiped out by the closing of plants around the nation, nor for the outsourcing of work. They are not the cause of massive job loss which occurs when employers increase the workloads of some workers while laying off others.

Do immigrants drive down U.S. wages?

- It is true that today U.S. workers are seeing their wages drop. This is especially true for young and minority workers. But more than anything, this is due to right wing politicians who refuse to raise the minimum wage. It is due to right wing policies that deny workers the right to form unions.

- Employers will always take advantage of workers who lack the right to defend themselves, using one group of vulnerable workers against the rest.

- Immigrants are not the cause of higher unemployment among African American and other minority workers. The continued toleration of racial discrimination in hiring, the dismantling of affirmative action, and weak labor laws are to blame.

- The only effective response is to fight for equal rights and equal treatment for all workers. That is why the legalization of immigrant workers, with full labor and civil rights, is in the interest of all workers.

Do immigrants join labor unions?

- Immigrant workers, even those without documents, have been at the forefront of many recent and ongoing labor struggles, including organizing drives and strikes.

- Employers regularly use the threat of arrest and deportation to break up union actions wherein immigrant workers are involved.

- Immigrant workers have been a major factor in the struggle for the \$15 an hour minimum wage, the WalMart struggle and many other such actions. They are helping to rejuvenate U.S. organized labor, and would be even more active if they did not have to fear deportation if arrested.

- This is why the AFL-CIO and many individual unions strongly and actively support the immigrants' rights struggle.

Do immigrants pay their fair share of taxes?

- Like other workers, most undocumented and documented immigrant workers have both federal and state income taxes deducted from their paychecks –but undocumented workers often are unable to claim deserved refunds. An undocumented worker picking tomatoes in Florida pays more income taxes proportionately than many a corporate executive.

- Undocumented Workers pay \$13 billion a year in Social Security taxes (according to the Social Security Administration, \$100 billion

over the last decade) but are ineligible to collect benefits.

- Immigrants, documented or not, pay sales taxes every time they buy something. They pay property taxes too, either for property they own or through rent paid to the landlord.

What about the crime rate among immigrants?

- Numerous studies show that the rate of violent and property crime among immigrants, with or without documents, is lower than that of comparable segments of the U.S. citizen population, even though anti-immigration agitators try to give the opposite impression by highlighting isolated cases of shocking crimes.

- Trump claims there are “millions” of criminals among the undocumented immigrants. All who have seriously studied the situation claim that this is an outrageous exaggeration.

What about terrorism?

- Undocumented immigrants were not connected to 9-11 or any other recent terrorist attacks. Every one of the 9-11 terrorists came here on a legal visa issued by the U.S. State Department.

- The vast majority of undocumented and documented immigrants have nothing to do with terrorism, but come here to work and be with family.

- Recent refugees from Syria, Iraq and Afghanistan, now a focus of such a hate campaign by the U.S. right, have been carefully vetted before being let into the United States.

- If immigrants and refugees could have a legal way of getting here, any danger of terrorists secretly getting in would be greatly reduced.

What is the impact of immigrants on social, health care and educational services?

- Immigrant workers are not getting a free ride. Most immigrant workers pay the same federal, state and local taxes as others, which finance our schools, health clinics and other public services.

- Immigrant workers, alongside their native born co-workers, generate fortunes for their employers in industries such as agribusiness, meatpacking, care of the elderly and construction.

- However, Republican administrations since Reagan, and the current Republican controlled Congress, have given the super rich super tax cuts, and Donald Trump and the G.O.P. controlled Congress are planning to cut taxes even more. If these tax cuts were rolled back, there would be enough money to finance needed services for everybody, immigrant and U.S. born.

- There is no evidence that new immigrants pose a public health danger to their neighbors. Indeed, studies show that they are, on the whole, healthier than comparable sectors of the U.S. population.

Do immigrants threaten the English language and American culture?

- There have always been other languages spoken alongside English in the United States, including Native American languages, Spanish, French and German dialects. The different language communities have enriched our country culturally, not harmed it.

- As a multilingual, multicultural country, the United States has never had an “official” language, and there is no need for one now.

- Our country’s experience has been that while new immigrants may struggle a bit with the English language, the second generation always speaks English fluently. This is just as true of Latino, Asian and African immigrants today as it was of other immigrants in the past.

- All over the country, classes for teaching English as a second language are jammed full. The vast majority of new immigrants believe fervently in democracy, family and freedom; and thus are a boon to our country, and not a menace.





What is really behind the anti-immigrant furor?

- Right wing politicians like Donald Trump and Ted Cruz want to distract the public’s attention from the failures of the capitalist system and their own anti-worker policies. These events have lost U.S. workers millions of jobs, homes, savings, income, and their sense of security;. Rather than having public anger focus on the real culprits—the “one percent” and their political enablers—the ruling class tries to use immigrants with or without papers as scapegoats.
- Big business interests want cheap labor but do not want workers to have rights. So they whip up scare stories about immigrant “rapists” and “drug dealers” and Muslim “terrorists”. This works to the detriment not only of immigrants but of all workers in the United States.
- Racism and ethnic prejudice, and also prejudice against speakers of languages other than English as well as against Muslim and other non-Christian religious faiths is a very strong element in the anti-immigrant agitation, especially by Donald Trump and his allies. The current efforts to keep families and children fleeing violence in Central America has a strong racist tinge.
- The political right in the United States and big business interests fear that immigrants, if empowered to vote and participate politically, will support candidates and policies that are not aligned with the interests of the one percent.

What is the solution?

The solution is not to hang a “keep out’ sign on the Statue of Liberty’s torch. The solution is not to waste taxpayer money on a useless and environmentally destructive fence or wall at the border. The solution is to carry out a comprehensive, worker-friendly immigration reform including:

- Legalization of all current undocumented immigrants, with a clear path to citizenship so they can vote and participate in the political system.

- Avoid “guest worker” programs that keep workers from other countries in conditions of near peonage while they undermine the wages of other workers in this country.
- Changes in U.S. visa policies so that working people who need to come here can do so legally without risking their lives, violating the laws or getting stuck in “guest worker” programs in which their rights are not respected.
- Ending racial and national prejudice and discrimination in the administration of U.S. immigration laws; end border enforcement policies that have exposed immigrants from Mexico, Central America and the Caribbean to discrimination, to abusive detention practices and sometimes to violent acts by authorities.
- Giving immigrant workers the same rights on the job and in the community that other workers have, so that they can join unions and fight together with other workers for better wages and working conditions;.
- Changes in U.S. international trade and foreign policy so that the development of the economies of poorer countries is no longer undermined by multinational corporations and U.S. government interference. Stop supporting abusive and corrupt right wing governments in other countries whose policies force people to migrate.
- While work is done on legislation for a comprehensive immigration reform, suspend all deportations and end programs like 287 (g) which delegate immigration enforcement tasks to local police, leading to racial profiling and other abuses, as well as the requirement that employers use
- End use of E-Verify.
- The DACA (Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals) to protect law abiding undocumented immigrants brought into this country As minor children should be defended against attacks by Trump and his allies must be defended, and the DAPA program which would have protected the undocumented parents of U.S. citizens must be revived, while we work toward a comprehensive immigration reform.

- Keep on marching, protesting and speaking out for the rights of all immigrants.
- It is cruel and irrational to be deporting people who will qualify for legalization once comprehensive immigration reform takes place.
- Keep on fighting against racial profiling and all forms of racism and ethnic bigotry and discrimination.

How are Immigrants and their allies fighting back against the anti-immigrant furor?

- All around the country, cities, states, churches, universities and other institutions have built a massive sanctuary movement which refuses all cooperation with the Trump administration's efforts to criminalize and deport immigrants.
- local neighborhood organizations are developing "rapid response" networks to mobilize the people against government attempts to repress immigrant families.
- U.S. citizens of all ethnic and national backgrounds are stepping forward to carry out actions, including civil disobedience, to oppose the repressive Trump policies.
- Trump's effort to ban visitors from certain Muslim majority countries has been met with a strong negative response, with

demonstrations at airports and legal action which has partly blocked the carrying out of the banning orders.

- At town hall meetings and other public forums, thousands of citizens are speaking out against all aspects of the Trump agenda, including the anti-immigrant and anti-Muslim measures.
- There will be many more such tactics developed to block these cruel policies. *All of them merit our full support!*

AND THE DEFEAT OF THE REPUBLICAN PARTY AT THE POLLS, IN STATE ELECTIONS IN 2017 AND IN THE MIDTERM FEDERAL ELECTIONS IN 2018, IS OF VITAL IMPORTANCE. WE NEED TO ELECT A CONGRESS, STATE LEGISLATURES AND GOVERNORS AND LOCAL OFFICIALS WHO WILL ACT FORCEFULLY TO BLOCK THE TRUMP ADMINISTRATION'S ANTI-IMMIGRANT FRENZY!

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FOR MORE INFORMATION AND SOURCES:

National Immigration Forum. <https://immigrationforum.org/>

National immigration Law Center. <https://www.nilc.org/>

National Day Laborer Organizing Network. <http://www.ndlon.org/en/>

The Pew Hispanic Center. www.pewhispanic.org

Peoples World/Mundo Popular. <http://www.peoplesworld.org>

AFL-CIO on Immigration. <http://www.aflcio.org/Issues/Immigration>

American Immigration Council. <http://www.immigrationpolicy.org/>

Migration Policy Institute. <http://www.migrationpolicy.org/>

The Politics of Immigration: Questions and Answers.
By Jane Guskin and David Wilson. 2007, Monthly Review Press.

They Take Our Jobs! And 20 Other Myths About Immigration.

By Aviva Chomsky. Beacon Press, 2007
<http://www.beacon.org/They-Take-Our-Jobs-P638.aspx>

Immigration Legal Resource Center.

<http://www.ilrc.org/for-immigrants-para-inmigrantes/know-your-rights>

Communist Party USA. <http://www.cpusa.org>

American Friends Service Committee Immigrants' Rights Program.

<https://afsc.org/key-issues/issue/immigrant-rights>

Conozca Sus Derechos.

<http://www.ilrc.org/para-inmigrantes/conozca-sus-derechos>

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