

IMMIGRATION

MYTHS **VS** FACTS

a look behind the anti-immigrant furor



Immigration myths v. facts: A look behind the anti-immigrant furor. A call to action in support of immigrants' rights.

Introduction: A look behind the anti-immigrant furor

Immigration was a top issue in the 2016 presidential election that brought Donald Trump to power. It has been used by the right-wing in other elections since, including in the 2018 mid-terms. It will certainly be used in the same way in the 2020 national elections.

Since Trump's elections immigrants, with or without papers, have been subjected to even greater exploitation, repression and abuse.

But immigrants and their friends and allies in organized labor and the community continue to fight hard for their rights. They are demanding an end to deportations that rip families apart, and to the jailing of immigrants and refugees. They are insisting on humane, practical solutions that will benefit both immigrant and U.S. born workers, including the legalization of undocumented workers through comprehensive immigration reform.

Most Democratic Party politicians, have committed themselves to such a reform. The main obstacles continue to be the Trump administration and the Republican Party, now in control of the Executive branch and the Senate, and working hard to pack the federal judiciary with anti-immigrant judges.

And Trump himself, as well as his ultra-right allies, continues to slander immigrants, often in blatantly racist terms, as criminals, terrorists and spongers. Trump has threatened to deport all 11 million undocumented immigrants thought to be in this country. He

is ending the DACA program that was designed to give a break to undocumented immigrant young people who came here as children with their families. His Republican allies, similarly, have blocked the Obama administration's DAPA program, that would have helped undocumented parents of U.S. citizen children. His administration is threatening to block immigration related benefits, such as citizenship by naturalization, to low income immigrants who utilize government programs. He is even threatening naturalized citizens, and his allies are once more attacking the "birthright citizenship" clause of the 14th amendment.

In response to this all-out attack on immigrant workers and their families, millions of new citizens have been registering to vote and getting involved in the political process as never before.

But Trump and his allies, with their barrage of lies, 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 these lies and slanders 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,

Luis from Honduras states that he is came here seeking asylum because he is being persecuted by the military as a member of the Partido de Libre for protesting against the injustices placed on poor people, there is no medicine for the sick, my cousin could not have a bullet removed from her leg because there was no scalpel available. (LelBRE is the political party founded by ex-president Manuel Zelaya and allies after he was overthrown in the U.S. backed coup in 2009.)



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.
- Global warming and the deterioration of the environment have destroyed the livelihood of many farming families, especially in Central America, so they can no longer survive in their home countries.

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 and services 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

Amanda says she was forced to do the bookkeeping and payroll for gang members, she got tired of doing that and had to flee for her life. There are many professionals who are forced to do the work of the gangs.

IMMIGRANT story

\$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 Republicans in Congress, have given the super rich super tax cuts, and now the Trump administration has done this once more with the giant 2017 tax giveaway to the one percent. If these tax cuts were rolled back, and if the bloated military budget were drastically cut, there would be enough money to finance services for all who need them, immigrants 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?

Nelson said gang members are after him because he was a witness to the killing and raping of women whose families were not able to pay the fees demanded by the coyotes (immigrant smugglers).

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Jose states that he has made this long journey because there are not enough jobs, anyone over 45 years old is considered too old to hire, education opportunities for working people are minimal, only 3 out of 10 get an education, classes are for only 4 hours per day.

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- 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 interfer-

ence. Stop supporting abusive and corrupt right wing governments in other countries whose policies force people to migrate.

- Effectively put the brakes on global warming so that rural people in other countries are not driven off their lands.
- 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 E-Verify to check up on the immigration status of people they hire.
- The DACA (Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals) and DAPA (Deferred Action for Parents of Americans) programs, introduced by executive order by President Obama and sabotaged by Trump and the Republicans, should be fully restored by means of Congressional legislation.
- 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!

The defeat of the Republican Party at the polls, especially in the national elections in 2020, is of vital importance. We need a president and congress, as well as governors, state legislatures 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:

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

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FIRM / Center for Community Change
<https://fairimmigration.org/>

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