

IMMIGRATION MYTHS V. FACTS:

**A look behind
the anti-immigrant furor.
A call to action in support of
immigrants' rights!**

by the CPUSA Political Action Commission

Immigration has continued to be a top issue in Congress and state legislatures. Republicans have scapegoated immigrants all the while immigrants continue to fuel our economy and rebuild many communities throughout the United States.

The recent presidential election has halted some of the vicious hate mongering, but the upcoming 2022 midterm congressional elections will once again bring out the attacks on immigrants and Latinos without addressing the importance of providing legal status to the 11 million undocumented immigrants.

Undocumented immigrants, with or without papers, have been subject to reactionary attacks including efforts to curtail immigration from Latina/o America by creating more border walls and using the desert as a weapon of death. Moreover, undocumented immigrants are subjected to exploitation, repression and abuse by the Department of Homeland Security, Border Patrol, and ICE. 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 abusive apprehension and confinement 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 obstacle continues to be the Republican Party, the power of the filibuster, and the packing of the federal judiciary with anti-immigrant judges. The ultra-right continues to slander immigrants, often in blatantly racist terms, as criminals, terrorists and spongers. In response to the all-out attack on immigrant workers and their families during the Trump administration, millions of new citizens have been registering to vote and getting involved in the political process like never before contributing greatly to Joe Biden's win in 2020. But Trump and his allies, with their barrage of lies, nativist reactionary rhetoric, and hate speech, have 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 and to clarify the immigration bills before Congress and Biden's stands on immigration. It is also intended to be a guide for our own actions.

Why are so many immigrants coming to the United States?

• **Working people and poor farmers 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. Such trade agreements serve capitalist interests where jobs are outsourced for cheap labor in the accumulation of profits.

• **After NAFTA came into force, more than 1.3 million Mexican farmers were driven out of business.** CAFTA-DR 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 other rich countries have preyed on the resulting excess of cheap labor,** and have sent labor recruiters into economically depressed regions of Mexico and Central America.

• **Moreover, economic stagnation has led**

to political instability and an increase in violence and crime. This has sent thousands of children and families fleeing from some areas, especially the Central American countries of Honduras, El Salvador, Guatemala and Caribbean countries such as Haiti. People are fleeing violence in their countries of origin and have a right to request asylum under international and U.S. law.

• **The big corporations and other wealthy interests that exploit workers, both immigrants and non-immigrants,** prey on such economic hardships to divide the working class and increase their own wealth and power.

• **The Trump administration greatly increased the detention of immigrants, even ones who committed no crime.** In addition, they continued the policy of subcontracting such awful policy to the corrupt private prison industry, which is known for its abusive treatment of prisoners. While President Biden has stated he wants to end all private prisons contracts, his administration has continued to rely on private contractors to detain immigrants.

• **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. Global climate change has led to massive tropical storms and hurricanes, causing massive displacement of people unable to grow enough food to feed their families. Droughts caused by global climate change are a big factor in Central American migration.

There has been a common pattern throughout

history with the U.S. supplying military aid to client states with the objective of protecting U.S. foreign interests. PLAN MERIDA was signed into law in 2008, between the governments of the United States, Mexico and other Central American countries as a means of combating organized crime. Since the initiative, the drug war in Mexico in particular has turned into a quasi-genocide resulting in huge loss of life through armed violence with the majority of weapons arriving from the U.S. It has long been argued that the demand for drugs in the U.S. has been intentionally fomented by the US government as a way of disrupting and destroying the poor and communities of color.

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, sponsorship 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. Today it is nearly impossible for people who don't have specialized skills, or close relatives in the U.S., to come at all. People in the United States who want to sponsor relatives to come here need to prove a certain level of financial ability to support them.
- **The U.S. government is also very restrictive in recognizing who is a genuine refugee meriting asylum or not, except when it comes to people leaving Cuba who state they are fleeing persecution.** In March 2020, The Trump administration basically cut off the right to seek asylum at the borders and



the Biden administration continues the policy under U.S. Title 42 put into place allegedly for public health reasons during COVID. This expulsion policy violates human rights and US and international asylum law by effectively closing the border to asylum seekers. After 6 months, this policy remains in place under Biden's administration although there have been exceptions made for unaccompanied children and families in extremely vulnerable situations. Biden should rescind this policy immediately and provide a fair and complete process for all who are seeking asylum and without increasing militarization of the border.

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, for example in agricultural

work such as in cherry and apple growing, and in starting small businesses.

- **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 for profit.** There is no labor union for workers in maquiladoras/factories that US companies move outside of the US. They are not the cause of massive job loss which occurs when employers increase the workloads of some workers while laying off others. Such predatory capitalist posturing for profit often unjustly and inhumanely puts blame on immigrant workers for the loss of jobs.

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.



- When it comes to state and local taxes, undocumented immigrants pay more than \$11 billion a year

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.

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 huge tax cuts, and the Trump administration did 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?

- 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 continue to 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. The current efforts to keep out 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. No more funding for militarization of the borders! 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.

- **All TPS (Temporary Protected Status) recipients should be allowed to become permanent residents immediately**

- **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.** Advocate for 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.

- **End 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, abusive detention practices, violent acts by authorities, and sometimes death. Challenge the attacks against critical race theory and whiteness studies which are a means of addressing racism and the normalizing of the plague of racial prejudice and discrimination in the U.S.

- **Give 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;.

- **Change 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.

- **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. Demand that local, county and state police agencies disconnect themselves from Homeland Security, Border Patrol and ICE. Lobby legislative and executive officials and pressure them not to discriminate against the foreign born, including those without papers, in the provision of social services such as schools, college scholarships and tuition, health care and housing.

- **DACA (Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals) should be fully put in place for all DREAMERS by means of Congressional legislation.**

- **Demand deferred action and a pathway to legal residency for undocumented immigrant workers involved in complaints against employers.** Demand citizenship for all essential workers.

- **Support and protect asylum seekers and other vulnerable populations** by providing a way to present at the border and request asylum without fear of detention or deportation.

- **Congress should pass the U.S. Citizenship Act of 2021, HR 1177, providing for legalization of most of the 11 million immigrants without documents.**

- **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.** This is expected to happen with passage of the US Citizenship Act of 2021, HR 1177. Per Biden instructions, the DHS/ICE



can now use prosecutorial discretion to dismiss court proceedings that lead to deportations. Advocate for ICE prosecutors to dismiss deportation cases.

- 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 cooperation with efforts to deport immigrants.
- Local neighborhood organizations have developed “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 repressive immigration policies.
- At town hall meetings and other public forums, thousands of citizens spoke out against all aspects of the Trump agenda, including the anti-immigrant and anti-Muslim measures. Going forward, immigrant rights activists will need to continue to be vigilant about the implementation of such policies, as the Republicans rally their anti-immigrant supporters.
- There will be many more such tactics developed to block cruel policies and to organize to increase support for progressive, fair, comprehensive immigration legislative reform. All of them merit our full support!

How to Organize!

- Build coalitions between parties and labor groups, faith-based groups, environmental groups.
- Recruit young, energetic organizers
- Focus on the importance of getting out the vote in 2022
- Focus on getting progressive coalitions out in the streets to oppose right-wing tactics of voter suppression, anti-labor, and anti-racial equity strategies
- Boycotts and divestment campaigns. As coalitions in the immigration movement continue to build support for national legislation, a more formal plan of action will be required that uses economic means and leveraging, putting pressure on members of Congress by way of pressuring corporations and individuals who fund their reelection campaigns, building a stigma around certain transactions and/or by draining certain institutions of resources. This strategy would use tactics like boycotts, strikes, and divestment campaigns to pressure corporations that rely primarily on immigrant labor. Boycotts to stigmatize certain industries that rely upon immigrant labor but refuse to lobby members of Congress for immigration reform would be the immediate plan of action. Another tactic would be divestment, pulling investments from stocks, bonds, and funds within certain industries and destabilizing the market in certain industries, such as meat processing, manufacturing, and construction sectors.

The defeat of the Republican party at the polls in 2022 is of vital importance. We need legislators in both houses of Congress willing to pass progressive legislation including comprehensive immigration reform and an end to the filibuster.

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The 2021 edition is available on-line at:

<https://cpusa.org/article/immigration-myths-v-facts-a-look-behind-the-anti-immigrant-furor-2/>

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