

1 Racist co-workers

At my first job, when we lived in Georgia, I was harassed and called names. All my co-workers were white and they constantly harassed and abused me and called me names. My manager did nothing about it because he was racist, too. I don't know why I put up with it for so long. It was emotionally draining and I was suspended twice because of false accusations by my co-workers. **Abdi, 32, Washington**

When I worked in a dairy, two of my co-workers were harassing me. I told the boss and he said he would rather lose one worker than two, so I could quit but he wasn't firing both of them. **Maria, 27, Idaho**

2 You work and don't get paid

I work for people who come to a day labor center to hire people. Sometimes people don't pay us for our labor, even if they hire us through the day labor center, which is there to protect workers from being exploited.

Gustavo, 52, Washington

3 The Sanctuary Movement

In the early 80's, thousands of refugees from Central America came to the US, fleeing political repression and human rights violations. The US government, despite the role it played in supporting the repressive governments they were fleeing, tried to shut these refugees out. Churches, congregations, and temples around the country began advocating for refugees, providing them with social services, and offering sanctuary. The churches were successful in changing US policy and getting refugee and asylee status for tens of thousands of refugees.

Today, as the fight for comprehensive immigration reform grinds on, churches, congregations and temples are forming a new sanctuary movement. They are offering services and sanctuary to undocumented immigrants threatened by ICE raids and other enforcement activities. (For more information go to: www.newsanctuarymovement.org)

4 The Dream Act

The Dream Act (S.774 and H.R. 1275) is a bill that would provide undocumented students with a path to citizenship and lift federal regulations that prevent some states from letting undocumented students pay the lower state resident tuition. In October there was a cloture vote in the Senate (a vote to quit talking about the bill and vote on the merits) but there were not enough votes in favor to cut off the debate so it died. The chances that it will come up again this year are slim.

Stories from In Our Own Voices: The hardest part about being an immigrant is that when you finish high school you can't go to college because your parents don't make enough to send you, and you can't qualify for loans or scholarships if you don't have a green card. If you have the highest GPA in your school, it's worthless. **Pancracio, 31, Oregon**

5 You were exposed to Pesticides

We work under the sun on a beet farm, and we come into contact with a lot of chemicals. My husband developed allergies from working with chemicals on another farm, and the doctor told him not to work with chemicals anymore. He has to work, though, and he will keep doing this job. **Veronica, 33, Idaho**

I work in the fields in Yakima. They do not give us breaks, water, or bathrooms. Sometimes they spray pesticides in the fields next to us and the wind blows it on us. We have no protective gear. Other times they make us enter fields where the pesticides have been sprayed. **Antonio, Washington**

6 You bought a house

As the housing market heated up in recent years, mortgage lenders and real estate agents began marketing to undocumented people. They eliminated barriers like requiring borrowers to have a social security number. Following the recent ICE raids on workplaces, there have been many stories of families losing the equity they had built in their homes when the household income disappeared and their houses were foreclosed on.

Stories from In Our Own Voices: When you go out you're always looking over your shoulder. You're always thinking, 'I may not come back to my house.' **Pilar, 37, Washington**

7 Drivers' Licenses

Many states do not allow undocumented people to get drivers' licenses. Currently, undocumented people can get drivers licenses in 7 states -Hawaii, Maine, Maryland, Michigan, New Mexico, Utah, and Washington.

The Real ID Act, which Congress passed in 2005 without much debate, prohibits states from issuing drivers licenses to undocumented immigrants. It will force states to make every applicant provide extensive documentation of their identity and status; put everyone's private information in a national database; spend billions on the new requirements. A number of states have enacted laws that call on Congress to repeal or amend Real ID. (For more information go to: www.nilc.org)

Stories from In Our Own Voices: The hardest thing for me is not being able to get a driver's license. If you drive without one you are always scared you will be stopped by the police. But I have to go to the store to buy milk for my little son, or drive my kids to school.

Esmerelda, 21, Idaho

8. Health Care and language access

Federal civil rights law requires health care providers that receive federal funds (including Medicaid and Medicare) to provide their patients with interpretation and translation services if they need it. For a doctor, being able to communicate with a patient is one of the most basic steps in providing competent care. Despite these legal and ethical requirements, immigrants are often expected to provide their own interpreter, or go without. That means that parents end up relying on their children to translate, have a stranger like the hospital's janitor interpret, or just go without being able to communicate with their doctor.

Stories from In Our Own Voices: Last year, I went to the ER because I had a pain in my stomach. I had to use a telephone interpreter because they didn't have anyone to interpret in person. The hospital kept sending me bills and I pay what I can. Collections called me eight months ago, and the person who called spoke Spanish. They couldn't provide an interpreter for my health care, but they could find someone to call and threaten me in Spanish. **Natividad, Idaho**

9 Comprehensive immigration reform

Groups that are fighting for comprehensive immigration reform have agreed to fight for four principles, each equally important to fixing our broken system:

- Provide a Path to Permanent Resident Status and Citizenship for All Members of Our Communities
- Reunite Families and Reduce Backlogs
- Provide Opportunities for Safe Future Migration and Maintaining Worker Protections
- Restore Due Process to Immigrants

10 ICE Raids

Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) conducts raids at workplaces, homes, and other places. ICE raids have taken place in many communities in many states. When ICE goes to homes, they say that they are looking for specific people who have arrest warrants, but they pick up thousands of other people who happen to be nearby when they sweep through apartment complexes and homes. Raids tear apart families, terrorize children, and devastate communities.

11 Being unable to visit family in other countries

I haven't seen my parents in 12 years. It's really hard as a girl because you need your mom. But after a while you get used to it because there's no other way. You just have to call them, but it's hard because you don't really know them. You don't know what they do, what they like and don't like. You can't get much information over the phone. My brothers are like my parents now. I'd like to visit my parents but it's too hard to come back, and we can't get a visa for my mother to come here.

Cristina, 17, Washington

12 Citizenship Exam

Another barrier on the path to citizenship is the citizenship test, or naturalization exam. With some exceptions for seniors and people with disabilities, an applicant has to show that they can read, write, and speak English. They also have to pass a test about the history and government of the United States. The test has been recently redesigned and made even harder. It includes questions like "What is the rule of law?" and "Who was President during World War I?" that would be difficult for someone born and raised in the US to answer. Applicants will have to take the new test starting in October 2008.

13 Your petition is denied because you've been accused of lying

Shortly after we got married, I filed a visa petition for my wife Claudia. After the petition was approved, Claudia's case was sent to the U.S. Embassy in Ciudad Juarez, Mexico, for her green card interview. The officer at the Embassy misunderstood my wife, and wrote in her notes that my wife had lied to a border official in the past. The officer then told us that my wife was not eligible for a visa. Claudia and I tried to correct the officer, but she did not allow us to correct her. The Embassy denied Claudia's visa. After that interview, I met with an immigration lawyer. The lawyer explained to me that people who falsely claim to be United States citizens are not eligible to become permanent residents. There is no exception to this rule. The lawyer also told me that, even though the officer misunderstood what Claudia told him, there is no way to appeal the officer's decision in the United States courts.

Luis, Washington

14 Racial Profiling

As Congress has repeatedly failed to work for a comprehensive national solution to the broken system, state and local governments have gotten involved in immigration enforcement. Local police departments around the country are engaging in racial profiling, pulling over Latino drivers and asking them for proof of immigration status. Organizations have heard many stories of immigrants who have been turned over to Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) when they went to city hall or court to do things like pay a traffic ticket. When local police enforce immigration law, they erode the trust immigrant communities have in the police and make it impossible for immigrants to call for help when they need it.

Stories from In Our Own Voices:

Three years ago a police man treated me badly. When I asked him for help, he responded inappropriately, saying we all dress badly and are in gangs. **Monica, 41, Oregon**

15 Immigrants and Insurance

A 2005 study by the Rand Corporation found that 68 percent of the undocumented immigrant adults they studied had no health insurance. This compared with 17 percent of the native-born Americans, 23 percent of immigrants who had become citizens, and 38 percent of immigrants who are permanent legal residents.

Stories from In Our Own Voices: My daughter has insurance because she was born here. When I go to the doctor I pay out of my own pocket. Since I don't have papers I don't have a right to insurance, they tell me. **Andrea, 18, Oregon**

16 Naturalization Fees

The path to citizenship is very expensive, and getting more so. This year, the government raised the application fees for immigrants applying for legal permanent residence and citizenship. The fee for an immigrant applying for a green card (legal permanent resident status) rose to \$1,010, a 155 percent increase. A green card holder applying to become a United States citizen has to pay an application fee of \$675, a 66 percent increase. Other government fees, lawyer's fees, and other costs add to the bill.

Stories from In Our Own Voices: Well, all of the immigration fees are so expensive. They have gone up a lot in five years. We don't really have a choice, we need our papers so they can charge what ever they want and we have to pay. There are so many costs: for a lawyer, a notary, all the applications. But to have papers would mean that you don't have to always live in fear that they're going to come and throw you out of the country. So, if they tell you \$2,000 you say, "Okay \$2,000." **Juana, 23, Washington**

17 Detention – Detention Denter

The U.S. government detains over 280,000 people a year in over 400 facilities at an annual cost of more than \$1.2 billion. Being in violation of immigration law is not a crime; it is a civil violation. But the majority of immigration detainees (57 percent) are held in 312 county and city prisons nationwide because the Department of Homeland Security's facilities do not have the capacity to hold all the detainees. Torture survivors, victims of trafficking, and other vulnerable groups can be detained for months or even years, further aggravating their isolation, depression, and other mental health problems associated with their past trauma. (**Detention Watch Network**)