

For You Were Once a Stranger



Immigration in the U.S. through the Lens of Faith

*Compiled by the
North Carolina Council of Churches*

*Based on the original study guide by
Interfaith Worker Justice*



Source: Student Action with Farmworkers

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AN EIGHT-WEEK STUDY GUIDE ON
IMMIGRATION FOR PEOPLE OF FAITH

*Compiled by the
North Carolina Council of Churches*

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Interfaith Worker Justice
www.iwj.org*

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Preface

The debate about immigration policy continues to divide people of good will across our nation and our state. Immigration divides us, in part, because of both the breadth and the depth of the issues involved – from powerful global economics to fast-changing local cultures, from the complex world of international politics to family histories intricately woven across borders, from worldwide patterns of migration to the very heart of American identity.

The question of how to respond to the complicated realities of immigration has divided us not only as Americans, but also as people of faith. What do our faith traditions have to say about immigrants and foreigners? What resources do we have for naming forms of oppression and liberation in our society? And how might we learn to live with such radical hospitality that we find ourselves ready to welcome even the “least of these” (Matthew 25:40) – willing to obey God rather than the laws of any human authority (see Acts 5:29)? To think theologically about immigration may not provide people of faith with specific policy solutions, but inevitably it does change the nature of the debate itself, transposing it from the realm of fear and scarcity to the realm of love, generosity and abundance.

For 75 years, the North Carolina Council of Churches has been fighting racism and working towards a more just society. Today, this work continues as we learn to welcome immigrants with open arms. We believe that this study guide will help your congregation wrestle with these issues in a faithful way.

We offer our deepest thanks to Interfaith Worker Justice and to the individual authors for permission to reprint this study guide. This publication would not have been possible without the generous support of the Z. Smith Reynolds Foundation.

-George Reed & Chris Liu-Beers
May 2009

How to Use this Handbook

By Hollen Reischer

Throughout the resource, you will find *Reflection Questions*. The questions invite you to critically reflect on the ideas and your personal and community experience, alone or with others. Reflection questions provide a starting point for study and dialogue. We invite you to think about and jot down your own questions as you read.

If you are a religious leader, use this resource as a study guide when preparing to deliver a sermon or facilitate a discussion related to immigration. Read this handbook to prepare to lead your community through the process of deciphering and understanding the barrage of information and misinformation about immigration.

Organize an immigration study circle with peers at your church, synagogue, mosque, or temple. Read one or more sections of the resource each week, and use the *Reflection Questions* to start the discussion.

Work with the leadership at your place of worship to host an event, such as a roundtable discussion or day-long conference on immigration. In addition to reading and discussing this resource, invite speakers who are able to discuss immigration from the perspective of just and humane immigration reform.

Read this resource with your place of worship, organization, or group of friends as you prepare to organize or take part in an action that supports just and humane immigration reform! See page 68 for more ideas.

Several chapters offer additional resources under the heading, "Read, Visit, Watch." These lists are by no means exhaustive, but they should give you a good start.

Terms in bold are defined in the *Glossary of Terms* on page 60.

Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

By Kim Bobo and Ted Smukler

On December 12, 2006, U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) agents simultaneously raided six Swift & Company meatpacking plants in five states. Approximately 1,000 ICE agents, some in riot gear, detained 1,282 workers at gunpoint, many shackled with chains between their legs.¹ In a case of blatant racial profiling, workers who appeared to be Latino were separated from non-Latino-looking workers and interrogated.

The raids were conducted on a day of enormous religious and family significance. Earlier that day, many families had gathered in church services to pay tribute to the Patroness of the Americas, *Our Lady of Guadalupe*. The United States is a country of strong religious values. Targeting Latin American immigrants on such an important religious holiday contradicts the American principle of respect for religious belief and provokes outrage from all who respect the dignity of workers as children of a just God.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

What is your or your ancestors' immigration story?

Why did you or your family members leave their homeland and come to the United States?

Was it a story of welcome or hardship?

We understand that many people of good will are troubled about the issue of immigration, given the problems many native-born workers face in today's workplace, including job insecurity and a downward push on wages and benefits. When our government actively generates fear and havoc among immigrant workers and their families, fuels the fires of bigotry and turns groups of workers against each other based on race, ethnicity and immigration status, we are all diminished.

The Problem

The economy isn't working. Jobs are bleeding out of the country.

U.S. corporations are moving production facilities and jobs throughout the planet in an effort to minimize labor costs and maximize profits, respecting no national borders. The American working class now includes the people of Mexico, China, India, and Vietnam—people who are working directly or indirectly for U.S.-owned corporations.

People in other countries, whose economies are in disarray, partially as a result of U.S. trade policies, migrate to areas and countries where they believe they can support themselves and their families, as people have done throughout history. American workers find their standard of living threatened, and many low-wage

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

Has immigration affected your community?

Why do you think that immigration is such a hot topic?

Should a person's immigration status under federal law be the determining factor in how that person is treated in our community?

workers have seen whole sectors of the job market change. African Americans previously made up a majority of hotel workers in Miami, Florida, but have been largely replaced by Latinos—reflecting both demographic changes and employer choices. Many U.S. born workers have been led to blame immigrants for making their jobs insecure.

Immigration has become the hot button issue of the early 21st century. Anti-immigrant organizing, vigilantism and even local, state and federal immigration legislation blur distinctions and place all people of foreign origin or non-white appearance under suspicion. Though three-quarters of all immigrants have legal status to live and work in the U.S., media reports and political posturing would have us believe that most immigrants are law breakers or even terrorists. Legal permanent residents, visa holders and naturalized citizens are victimized by widespread racialized hysteria.

There is no denying that the immigration system in the U.S. is broken. The legal status of immigrant workers must be addressed,

with 12 million undocumented people living and working here. Without legal status immigrant workers are victims of every kind of labor abuse and cannot protect their rights without fear of deportation. The continuation of a debased class of workers, whom employers can and do underpay, overwork, and exploit in legal and illegal ways, contributes to a downward push on wages and working conditions for all workers in the United States.

The Solution

The answer is comprehensive reform that protects the rights of all workers. Comprehensive immigration reform must aim to provide full and equal protections of employment and labor laws, civil liberties and civil rights for all workers in the U.S. Reform should work to remove economic incentives for the exploitation of immigrant labor and strengthen requirements to fairly consider hiring native-born workers. A reform package must include:

- A plan to **regularize the status** of most undocumented workers in the U.S. (i.e. granting permission to reside in the United States to people who once entered illegally or overstayed a temporary visa.)
- Halting deportations that separate parents from children and husbands from wives.
- Strong enforcement of all employment and labor laws.
- Elimination of **guest worker programs**—programs that bring in temporary workers with few or no rights—unless they include full workplace protections or provide a path to permanent residency and citizenship.
- Addressing structural issues created by trade and aid policies.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

What do you think about comprehensive immigration reform?

What values would you like to see most clearly reflected in the U.S. immigration system?

The Call of Faith

While immigration issues must be analyzed in the context of today's political landscape and economic challenges, the religious

community can and must inject the dimensions of justice and morality. People and communities of faith have struggled with the question of what our obligations are to people who are outsiders to our communities—strangers. The foundation story of the Jewish people is God’s liberation of God’s people out of slavery in Egypt. The Hebrews were strangers in Egypt, whose ancestors had come there to escape drought and famine in their land. The basic worship credo of ancient Israel begins with, “A wandering Aramean was my father” (Deuteronomy 26:5). Therefore, God’s Torah has constant reminders that the Israelite community must not mistreat foreigners residing among them. “You shall not wrong a stranger or oppress him, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt” (Exodus 22:21).

At the core of Christian belief is the profoundly radical vision of God lifting up the poor, the destitute, the homeless and the reviled over the comfortable and wealthy. Immigrants—strangers—are included in the vision of those that need mercy and justice. Jesus was homeless, ate with lepers and sinners, and taught in the Sermons on the Mount and on the Plain that the last shall be first. In the Book of Matthew, Chapter 2, Jesus’ family flees to Egypt as refugees from persecution and the threat of death in their home country. Other faiths—indeed all religions—believe in justice. We are one people, one community. We are all kin.

Read:

- *Christians at the Border: Immigration, the Church, and the Bible* by Daniel Carroll R.
- *Welcoming the Stranger: Justice, Compassion and Truth in the Immigration Debate* by Matthew Soerens and Jenny Hwang

Visit:

- www.welcometheimmigrant.org
NC Religious Coalition for Justice for Immigrants
- www.americasvoiceonline.org
America’s Voice

Watch:

- *Farmingville: Point of View* (2004) - www.farmingvillemovie.com
- *Dying to Live: A Migrant’s Journey* (2005) - www.dyingtolive.nd.edu

How Do We Speak of “The Stranger Among Us?”

Throughout this handbook, different words are used to describe people who come to the U.S. from other countries. Words have political implications. Some we use interchangeably, some we stay away from. Here we look at their deeper meanings and purposes.

1. What is the distinction between **immigrant** and migrant? At times these words are used interchangeably. All immigrants are migrants—people who have left their homes and traveled to a new place. Immigrants have all crossed national borders, whereas migrants may move from one part of a country to another. The word immigration implies the intention of permanently settling in a new country.
2. How do we refer to the people who came to the United States surreptitiously or came holding temporary visas and stayed after their visas expired? We use several terms interchangeably in this primer. *Undocumented immigrants* refers to the roughly 12 million people, 7 million adults and 5 million children, who are in the U.S. without documents attesting that they are authorized to be here. *Undocumented workers* refers to the adults in this group who are in the workforce. *Unauthorized immigrants* or *unauthorized working adults* are synonymous terms to *undocumented*. So is the term *people without documents*. These are the preferred terms used in this handbook. They describe without judgment, and are used in respect, without inflaming passions.

Illegal immigrants, illegal aliens, and unlawful workers are widely used terms and appear frequently in legislation and newspaper accounts of immigration issues. Faith communities try to avoid any term that implies that a human being is illegal. While we recognize that many people have crossed our borders or overstayed their visas without legal authorization and have therefore violated immigration laws, they are human beings entitled to internationally acclaimed human rights, and they are not in and of themselves illegal.

Chapter 2

IMMIGRATION: ECONOMIC, POLITICAL AND MORAL FRAMEWORKS

By José Oliva and Ted Smukler

Immigration to North America has been a primary source of peopling the continent ever since European sailors “discovered” the New World. But it has not been a constant stream. Historically important waves of migration have altered the make-up of North American society and changed the face of the nation that is now the United States. Immigration has rarely occurred without racist or **nativist** reaction, even though the only true native Americans were American Indians. Immigration waves included:

- English pilgrims and those that followed, including Germans, Scotch, Dutch and Africans brought to North America as slaves.
- 19th century immigrants including Irish Catholics arriving on the east coast and Chinese workers on the west coast.
- Waves of internal migration include large numbers of African Americans migrating north after the Civil War and into the 1960s.
- In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, rural southern black migrants were joined in the burgeoning industries of the North by Eastern and Southern European immigrants, who were considered and treated as racially and religiously inferior to those of Northern European ancestry.²

Today’s wave, with large numbers of Latin American immigrants, is one of unprecedented numbers and is unique in that it is the first time in the history of the United States that a huge mass of immigrants lack the status to legally work in this country. When the Immigration Reform and Control Act (IRCA) of 1986 passed, there were between three and four million undocumented people in the U.S.; by 2006, estimates of undocumented people in the U.S. have soared to 12 million.³ In addition, this wave of newcomers has come to parts of the country that have traditionally seen little to no immigration. Latin American immigration to the United

States accelerated over the last decade.

In December of 2003, several immigrant workers from a local restaurant in a Chicago suburb met with clergy and lay leaders. The workers were not being paid overtime for their work in excess of 40 hours per week. They were also being harassed and insulted, and in some cases outright physically attacked by their employer. They asked the congregations to stand with them to demand a change in their working conditions. A local pastor asked the workers why they chose to come to the United States, and received a response that surprised him. “We come here because of horrible economic conditions at home,” the worker said. “We are not here by choice. Who in their right mind comes here knowing they will be insulted and looked at as a threat? Who risks their lives crossing a militarized border and leaves their family, their culture, their life behind, unless they *have to*.” The answer was simple yet profound. It provided the clergy and community leaders the insight they needed to stand with these workers. In the end a combined effort led by religious leaders got the workers the changes they needed in their workplace.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

What happens to the relationship between worker and employer when the worker is undocumented?

How might unscrupulous employers use the situation to their advantage?

Since 2000, Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) has markedly increased its activity in nearly every corner of the U.S. The heightened level of enforcement was exacerbated by the sharp anti-immigrant backlash to the tragic events of September 11, 2001.

Unethical employers saw this as an opportunity to create fear on the shop floor among workers demanding improvements in their working conditions. Immigrant workers, particularly those without proper work authorization, became increasingly fearful of taking action to challenge unjust working conditions in their workplaces lest they be subject to worksite enforcement and possible deportation. Workers' centers and unions throughout the

U.S. became inundated with complaints from workers about abusive bosses who used immigration authorities as a threat, either overtly or subtly, to intimidate workers.

On December 12, 2006, armed ICE agents raided Swift & Company meat packing plants in Colorado, Texas, Utah, Minnesota and Iowa, arresting more than 1,000 workers, some chained like animals. Widespread racial profiling led to the arrests of many legal permanent residents and citizens. Family members were blocked from bringing documents into the plants to prove their loved ones' legal status. Worst of all, families were separated, as U.S. citizen children lost parents and bread winners to incarceration right before the Christmas holidays.

In January, 2007, 21 Smithfield Packing Company employees were arrested in an ICE raid in North Carolina, during a union organizing campaign of the United Food and Commercial Workers, a move that can clearly be read as intimidation of workers taking collective action to improve their working conditions.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

What does big business stand to gain from creating a class of workers with limited rights and *temporary* status?

Why do you think that some immigrant workers endure awful working conditions?

Why did the Chicago restaurant workers feel they had no choice but to come to the U.S.?

Have you ever been in a situation in which you had to make an "impossible" decision?

Despite the massive mobilizations in the spring of 2006 that put millions of immigrant workers and their allies on the streets of every major U.S. city, anti-

immigrant forces remain in control of the discourse that frames the issues. The critical issues, we are told, center on the need for border security and other law enforcement measures to stem the tide of illegal immigration to the United States—yet the enforcement-only approach has always driven immigrants further underground and compromised the safety and standards of work for immigrant and native-born people alike.

For workers' rights advocates and clergy working in immigrant communities, it has always been of paramount importance to cre-

ate trust, not just with individual immigrants but with the broader community. When workers are pitted against each other over immigration status, race, ethnicity or country of origin, the spiritual health of the nation as well as the economic and social well-being of working people are depleted.

Why Don't All Those Immigrants Just "Get Legal"?

By Sr. Attracta Kelly

Contrary to what seems to be a common misperception, an immigrant can acquire legal status in the United States in only a limited number of ways. This article provides a very basic overview of the major avenues. Readers should use it as a general guide. Those seeking legal advice on a specific situation should contact a qualified attorney.

The most common way for an immigrant to obtain legal status is through an application filed by a *Family Member*. The Family Member category is, in turn, divided into two general areas:

1. A current **United States Citizen** (USC) may apply for his/her spouse, children (under 21), and parents. This is called the *Immediate Relative Category*. Such applicants can acquire legal status relatively quickly (usually in as little as one year).
2. The second most common way for an immigrant to obtain legal status is through what's known as the *Preference Category*. A **USC** may also apply for his or her *unmarried* sons and daughters (21 and over). Processing usually takes about 6 years (unless the petitioner is from Mexico or the Philippines, in which case it takes about 15 years). A **USC** may apply for *married* sons and daughters, but processing takes about 8 years (18 years for petitioners from the Philippines and Mexico). A **USC** over 21 may apply for siblings with a waiting period of about 11 years (with Mexico, the waiting period is 14 and with the Philippines it's 22 years).

A **Legal Permanent Resident** (LPR) who has not yet become a naturalized citizen may apply for his or her spouse and children and for unmarried sons and daughters. The waiting periods to get legal status for applicants in this category range from six to twenty years, depending

on the nature of the family relationship and the applicant's country of origin.

It's important to note that just because the spouse or parent has filed a petition for their family member in this *Preference Category*, it does not give the family member any immediate legal right to live in the United States. Under the law, the family member must wait until the designated number of years has expired.

A second path to legal status involves a petition filed by an *Employer* for a necessary skilled worker. This process must first be approved by the United States Department of Labor after the employer has established that there is no citizen or legal permanent resident worker available to fill the particular position.

A third way for an immigrant to gain Legal Permanent Resident status is to first obtain **refugee/asylum** status. To qualify for asylum one must *prove* that he or she was the victim of persecution in his or her home country under one of the five protected areas (race, religion, nationality, membership in a social group, or political opinion). An applicant must apply within the year one enters the US. It is a very time-consuming process because one has to document all allegations of persecution. It is always difficult to find such documentation. Often, attorneys try to get it through State Department Reports and other international news sources, in affidavits from country experts and from whatever sources we can find to show that this particular individual was targeted and would most likely be targeted if he/she returned to the home country.

Finally, immigration law also allows a limited number of persons in very specific categories to "self-petition" – that is to apply for legal status on their own behalf. This includes: 1) certain specified groups of Salvadorans and Guatemalans, 2) persons afforded protection under the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA), 3) a category known as "Special Immigrant Juveniles" (these are children who have been neglected, abused or abandoned by their parents), 4) victims of human trafficking and 5) certain victims of other crimes.

Other than the ways mentioned in this article, it is currently almost impossible for an immigrant to attain legal status in the US. And as noted above, even for those who may be able to attain legal status, the waiting period is often measured in decades, not in months or years.

Chapter 3

UNRAVELING THE NATIONAL DEBATE

By Ted Smuckler and Elisabeth Solomon

Where are U.S. Immigrants coming from?

While popular perception may hold that the majority of immigrants are in the U.S. illegally, undocumented immigrants represent only slightly more than one-fourth (26%) of the foreign born population. Anti-immigrant laws and ordinances along with raids by immigration police lead to discrimination against anybody who looks or sounds foreign, including U.S. citizens and legal permanent residents.

Where do immigrants to the U.S. come from today? The answer is dramatically different when comparing legal permanent residents and undocumented immigrants, who presumably have much greater obstacles to entering and working in the U.S. legally. Seventy-eight percent of undocumented immigrants come from Latin America; 13 percent from Asia; six percent from Europe and Canada; and three percent from Africa and other.⁴ However, only 14.4 percent of legal permanent residents are from Mexico, as opposed to 56 percent of undocumented immigrants. The four next largest sources of legal permanent residents are India (7.5 percent), China (6.2 percent), the Philippines (5.4 percent) and Cuba (3.4 percent).⁵ National origin and social class are clearly factors in the ability to attain legal status.

Myth or Reality?

THE COSTS AND CONTRIBUTIONS TO U.S. TAXPAYERS OF UNDOCUMENTED IMMIGRANTS

A large body of evidence concludes that undocumented immigrants are net contributors to the U.S. economy, providing much more in taxes paid and work provided than they receive in public benefits. A recent paper of the National Immigration Law Center, "Paying Their Way and Then Some,"⁶ reviews studies from disparate sources that reinforce this conclusion, including:

- David Ellwood, Dean of the Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University
- Pew Hispanic Center
- A 2006 Open Letter to President Bush from 500 economists and social scientists of varying political persuasions
- The National Academy of Sciences
- The U.S. Social Security Administration
- The U.S. Internal Revenue Service

Yet many people opposed to creating a path to legalization and citizenship argue that undocumented immigrants cost U.S. taxpayers huge sums of money because of their alleged high use of taxpayer-funded programs. Various studies have attempted to show that both undocumented workers and legal permanent residents (green-card holders who are legally in the U.S.) drain the Medi-

caid, Food Stamp and education programs. Undocumented people's use of health care services is purportedly the biggest drain on U.S. taxpayers, followed by educating undocumented children.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

How do immigrants contribute to your community?

Have you hired immigrants? Have you benefited from the labor of undocumented immigrants? What work or services have they provided?

Are immigrants part of your faith community? What contribution do they make?

Does a wealthy country like the U.S. have any obligations towards those who are here without required documentation? What about our state? Our local government? Our community?

But "a lack of understanding about the economic and fiscal benefits of immigration has led to misguided public policies that discriminate against immigrants despite their contributions," according to the National Immigration Law Center.⁷

In addition to invaluable, and often poorly compensated labor, what do undocumented immigrants contribute to the public welfare? The U. S. Social Security Administration estimated that un-

documented immigrants pay approximately \$8.5 billion in Social Security and Medicare taxes annually.⁸ And the U.S. Internal Revenue Service determined that undocumented immigrants paid nearly \$50 billion in federal taxes from 1996 to 2003.⁹ Yet undocumented workers are ineligible to receive a number of benefits that their tax dollars subsidize:

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

If people who are here without required documents pay taxes (e.g., payroll tax, sales tax) should they be denied public services paid for by those taxes?

- Federal cash assistance payments such as Supplemental Security Income (SSI) and Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), Medicaid and Food Stamps.¹⁰ (An exception is made for undocumented pregnant women who can be covered at hospitals by emergency Medicaid.)¹¹
- Legal advocacy services provided by the federally funded Legal Services Corporation.¹²

So immigrant workers pay taxes, including social security withholding taxes, but are unable to claim many public benefits their tax dollars support. But anti-immigrant forces argue that they are a major burden on other hardworking taxpayers.

Undocumented immigrants are much more likely than other workers to lack health insurance and therefore avoid medical care in many instances. The RAND Corporation found that in 2000 only a small fraction of spending on health was for services to undocumented immigrants. The study estimated that \$1.1 billion in federal, state and local government funds was spent annually on health care for working age undocumented immigrants or about \$11 in taxes for each U.S. household. This represents only two-tenths of one percent of local, state and federal governments total spending on health care.¹³

But all the research in this area, including that undertaken by organized opponents of immigration, must rely on estimates and faulty data. The Government Accountability Office (GAO) and the Congressional Research Service (CRS) agree that data available

from local governments and federal agencies on hospital use are insufficient to reliably quantify the costs of health care for unauthorized people in the U.S.¹⁴ This is also the case when trying to estimate the cost of educating undocumented children.¹⁵

Immigrants contribute in other ways to the economic, social, and cultural life of the nation, through creating businesses, expanding consumer markets, and enriching the cultural life of a nation of immigrants.

Problems with the Current Immigration System

In the latest wave of immigration, when much focus is placed on undocumented workers from Mexico and Central and South American countries, conflicting interests and fears are expressed.

Many businesses want access to pools of immigrants as a cheap and reliable source of labor.

Undocumented workers, who fear being reported to immigration authorities, are less inclined to complain to their employers or to authorities about labor abuses than are workers who are legal residents of the U.S. Therefore, they are more likely to accept sub-standard wages.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

Who is the “we” of our community, who decides what “our” values are, and what are those values?

Are certain values more important than others? Which ones?

Should we only aid those in poverty in our community who are U.S. citizens? What about children?

Should a community expel a person based on his/her immigration status alone? What if that person is otherwise a member of the community in good standing?

Native born U.S. workers have seen their standard of living decline steadily since the late 1970s, for a host of related reasons: the decline of the manufacturing sector and outsourcing of jobs, falling rates of unionization, and the widening of the income gap between the wealthy and the rest of us.

Many blame their problems on immigrant workers, who have become more prominent in many industries—services, hospitality, construction, garment

manufacturing, agriculture—as wage levels and standards have fallen. In fact, research has shown that low-wage workers are negatively impacted by competition with undocumented immigrants.¹⁶

The current immigration “system” reflects these contradictory interests. On the one hand, workplace raids by ICE are sending a message that the U.S. is getting “tough” on undocumented immigrants and employers who hire them. (In fact, unscrupulous employers call ICE on themselves as a way to avoid paying their workers).¹⁷ But outside of a radical fringe such as the Minuteman and some talk show hosts, there is not a clamor for wholesale deportation. Some industries would collapse if unauthorized immigrants were removed from the workforce.

Undocumented workers make up less than five percent of the U.S. workforce. These workers are heavily concentrated in occupations that demand hard labor and are often poorly paid. Increased enforcement activity results in family separations and it drives immigrants further underground. But ICE raids and border patrols cannot stop the influx of undocumented immigrants, which is part of a global phenomenon created by trade and foreign policies that push people from their homes and countries and pull them to areas where a livelihood can be eked out. A new system is needed that can help immigrants gain legal status and can protect native-born workers from unfair competition.

Undocumented workers compete with legal permanent residents and native-born and naturalized citizens on an uneven playing ground.

This harms all workers and lowers standards for everybody, to the advantage of unscrupulous employers. Because undocumented workers are under constant threat of deportation, they accept inferior wages and conditions and cannot effectively assert their rights in the workplace.

The problem isn’t with the workers, who live, work and pay taxes in the U.S., but with their legal status.

Chapter 4

HOW GRANDMA GOT LEGAL

Illegal-immigration foes say today's migrants are different from their own forebears. They don't know U.S. history.

By Mae M. Ngai

“Made in America—by immigrants” and “We too have a dream” read signs at the May 1 [2006] marches across the country. By invoking an American ideal, today’s newcomers are staking their claim as the latest generation of nation-builders. But their critics object to this appeal to history; they resent comparisons to previous generations of immigrants, who were legal.

Sen. Jon Kyl (R-Ariz.), for example, says his grandparents—Dutch immigrants who settled in Nebraska—didn’t try to get ahead by breaking the law. Rather, they made it through “frugality...hard work, grit, honesty,” he says. “They would be very upset about people who didn’t do it the right way.”

Such comparisons between past and present miss a crucial point. There were so few restrictions on immigration in the 19th and early 20th centuries that there was no such thing as “illegal immigration.” The government excluded a mere one percent of the 25 million immigrants who landed at Ellis Island before World War I, mostly for health reasons. (Chinese were the exception, excluded on grounds of “racial unassimilability.”)

What’s more, statutes of limitations of one to five years meant that even those here unlawfully did not live forever with the specter of deportation. In the early 1900s, immigrants from Europe provided cheap, unskilled labor that made possible the nation’s industrial and urban expansion. They shoveled pig iron, dug sewers and subway tunnels and sewed shirtwaists. Even then, people born in the U.S. complained that the newcomers stole jobs, were ignorant, criminal and showed no desire to become citizens. The rhetoric was often unabashedly prejudiced against Italians, Jews, Poles and other “degraded races of Europe.”

In the conservative climate after World War I, Congress slammed

shut the golden door. For the first time, the U.S. imposed numerical limits on immigration. Congress gave the smallest quotas to Eastern and Southern European countries and excluded all Asians; it also created the U.S. Border Patrol and eliminated statutes of limitations on deportation. It exempted countries of the Western Hemisphere, however, in deference to agricultural labor needs and the State Department's tradition of pan-Americanism.

These quotas created illegal immigration as a mass phenomenon. And since that time, Americans have been of two minds about the problem. We want restrictions on immigration, but we hesitate to execute mass deportations. Congress has thus pursued border control, on the one hand, and legalization of the undocumented on the other.

Our legalization policies recognized that once a person settled here, had a family, a job and a home, he or she became a part of society. Separating families was seen as detrimental to individuals and society, and deportation was likened to banishment.

Here's how hundreds of thousands of illegal immigrants—mostly Europeans—became legal:

- The Registry Act of 1929 allowed immigrants who arrived before 1921 but had no record of their admission to register retroactively, for a \$20 fee.
- From 1935 to the late 1950s, to keep families together, tens of thousands of Europeans unlawfully in the U.S. were allowed temporarily to go to Canada and reenter the States legally as a permanent resident.
- In 1940, Congress authorized the suspension of orders of deportation in cases of hardship, which it defined as "serious economic detriment" to the immigrant's immediate family. The guidelines have become less generous, but the principle remains in the law.

In 1965, the U.S. repealed racial restrictions against Southern and Eastern Europeans and Asians, but the 1965 law also imposed quotas for the first time on Western Hemisphere countries. That created illegal immigration from Mexico and Central America.

The 1986 immigration reforms addressed the problem by legalizing nearly 3 million undocumented workers. It also called for increased enforcement—which didn't stop illegal immigration, it just made it more dangerous.

President [George W.] Bush [asked] Congress to provide today's undocumented immigrants with a pathway to citizenship, to establish a guest worker program and to add the National Guard to police efforts at the border. History is only partly on his side.

Providing a route to legalization—even one that is much less generous than we've offered in the past—at least adheres to precedent. But history shows that as long as we restrict the number of legal entries, there will be a parallel stream of unauthorized ones, even with tough enforcement laws. And the European experience with guest worker programs should warn us that guests don't always go home when they are supposed to.

To really tackle the problem, we might consider updating other policies from the nation's past. Reinstating a statute of limitations on deportation would limit the numbers of undocumented people in the country. We could also raise the ceiling on legal admissions — or eliminate it, especially for neighboring countries. This is not such a radical idea: The North American Free Trade Agreement has already lowered barriers to the movement of capital and products, and citizens of European Union states have free movement within the EU.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

What do you make of Ngai's assertion that undocumented immigrants today are not different from our ancestors?

Do you think it is true that at the root of this debate is the fact that most of us do not know the history of immigration and immigration policy?

Legalizing the undocumented is just and humane. But unless we address the restrictions on legal admission that do so much to cause illegal entries, the cycle of enforcement and legalization will continue.

Read:

- *Americans in Waiting: The Lost Story of Immigration and Citizenship in the United States* by Hiroshi Motomura
- *Deporting Our Souls: Values, Morality, and Immigration Policy* by Bill Ong Hing

Visit:

- www.nilc.org
National Immigration Law Center
- www.unitingnc.org
Uniting North Carolina

Watch:

- *El Inmigrante* (2006) - www.elinmigrantemovie.com
- *De Nadie* (2005) - www.lasamericafilms.org/films/Denadie.htm



Source: Photographs of Ellis Island, 1902-1913.

Immigrants seated on long benches, Main Hall, U.S. Immigration Station, Ellis Island, NY, ca. 1910

Chapter 5

IMMIGRATION AND NORTH CAROLINA: AN OVERVIEW

By Chris Liu-Beers, Marisol Jiménez McGee, Marty Rosenbluth

A contentious national issue like immigration is played out at the local level in many different ways. In this chapter we'll look specifically at North Carolina to see why immigration became a hot topic, how different agencies and politicians have responded, and ways that faith communities are becoming more involved.

A Demographic Shift

Nationally, Latinos are now the largest ethnic minority in the United States with nearly 45.5 million people living in the country. North Carolina, like many parts of the country, has experienced a very rapid growth in its immigrant population over the last 15 years or so. In fact, from 1990-2000, the Hispanic population in North Carolina grew by nearly 400 percent – the fastest rate in the country.¹⁸ The Pew Hispanic Center estimates that about 600,000 Latinos live in North Carolina. Of these, 20 percent are U.S. Citizens and about 300,000 to 400,000 are undocumented.¹⁹ Why have Latinos been coming to North Carolina? There are several main reasons.

Shifting Economies and a New Workforce

Historically, North Carolina's economy had been based primarily in production, manufacturing, and agriculture. However, the enactment of the **North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA)** in 1994 had a devastating effect on the state's economic base with many industries leaving local communities for Mexico. From 1993 to 2000, North Carolina lost over 31,000 jobs with the heaviest concentration in manufacturing (26,694).²⁰ In the wake of fleeing industries, local communities that had depended on textile mills and furniture factories, for example, were left with little to no job opportunities. In response, the state began a strategic economic shift from a production-based economy to an intellectually-based economy in an effort to become globally competitive.²¹ This shift meant that the state began attracting more white-collar

professionals who chased jobs in growing urban centers like the Triangle, the Triad and the Charlotte suburbs. At the same time, North Carolina “baby boomers” were having fewer children than generations past and these children were increasingly likely to pursue higher education through the state’s public university or community college systems.²² With diplomas in hand, these newly educated professionals were unlikely to return to their hometowns in favor of urban centers around the state. As a result, local communities faced an age gap in their workforce with an increasingly aging population unable to fill local economic needs.

Familiarity and Opportunity

The combination of a growing construction and service industry and an increasingly intellectualized workforce meant that North Carolina faced a labor shortage in meeting these new demands. North Carolina had faced such labor shortages before, specifically in agriculture. As in the past, the North Carolina Growers Association (NCGA) continues to be the largest employer of legal H2A guest workers in the nation²³ with 94 percent of these migrant workers being Spanish-speakers.²⁴ This history created a “migrant pathway” between Mexico, other Latin American countries, and North Carolina with workers traveling between countries during growing seasons and developing a familiarity with local communities.

Interestingly, just as NAFTA displaced workers throughout the U.S., workers in Mexico also found themselves pushed away. With rural economies based primarily on corn, Mexican farmers found themselves forced off their land since they were unable to compete with agribusiness and corporations that were arriving. As the farmers migrated to the north of Mexico and large cities in search of jobs in factories and manufacturing, they found themselves competing for factory jobs that did not pay fair wages, did not provide safe working conditions, and eventually disappeared as corporations moved on in search of “cheaper sources of labor” in other countries. Already migrating within their own country, these workers began to look increasingly across the border for an opportunity to earn enough wages to support themselves and their families. The “migrant pathway” between North Carolina and Mexico became a natural destination for immigrants to pur-

sue opportunities. They had developed relationships in local communities, were somewhat familiar with the landscape, and were recruited by local employers. Once the initial communities had arrived, they sent word back to their families that North Carolina needed workers in the growing construction and service industries, that there was a growing Latino community to welcome them, and that opportunities to better support their families were available in the state.

During this time, some communities welcomed immigrants with relatively open arms. A 1995 editorial in the *Raleigh News & Observer*, entitled “Welcome, newcomers,” said that “The new folks [i.e. Hispanics] come across as awesomely optimistic about their future here. There’s no reason why everyone else shouldn’t be optimistic right along with them.”²⁵ In many places, this attitude would not last.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

How has immigration affected your community? How have members of your community responded to these changes? How have local elected officials responded?

How can faith communities help promote a spirit of tolerance and welcome in the midst of rapid demographic change?

A Broken System

As we have already seen in Chapters 2 and 3, the current immigration system in the U.S. is deeply flawed. Contrary to what we often hear, for most immigrants – and nearly all *poor* immigrants – the “line” to stand

in to enter the country legally simply does not exist. There is a striking disconnect between the reality of economic globalization on the one hand and an outdated and dysfunctional immigration system on the other. The system imposes very long wait times on immediate family members who want to be reunited – leaving them with a nearly impossible choice: is it worth waiting 5 years or more to be reunited “legally” with a spouse or child? In many cases, families in North Carolina decided that the cost of entering the country without the proper documents is worth the benefit of remaining together as a family.

Anti-Immigrant Backlash

Generally speaking, attitudes about immigrants in North Carolina began to shift noticeably at the beginning of the 2000's. Two different events, the attacks of September 11, 2001 and the release of census data showing a tremendous increase in North Carolina's Hispanic population, suddenly loomed large in the public consciousness. The threat of another terrorist attack and the knowledge that many undocumented people had come to live here fueled the fire of fear.

At the same time, across the state, Spanish-language signs emerged at banks, restaurants, and courthouses. Taco trucks appeared on street corners. Neighborhoods changed quickly, some seemingly overnight.

Frustration with a broken immigration system and fears over the changing face of NC communities erupted with the introduction of a bill in the NC General Assembly, HB 1183 – Access to Education and a Better Economic Future. The bill proposed allowing undocumented students who had lived in North Carolina for at least 4 years and graduated from a North Carolina high school to qualify for in-state tuition rates at public universities and community colleges. Immediately following its introduction in April 2005, North Carolina engaged in a furious debate that often blurred the lines between the issue of in-state tuition and that of a broken immigration system. Legislators who sponsored or co-sponsored the bill and organizations that advocated on its behalf became the targets of hate mail, threats of violence, and constant criticism from both local and national news outlets. The bill was never brought out of committee for discussion and has not been re-introduced. Further, in 2008 the NC Community College System barred undocumented students from admission to any of its community colleges while it began studying the costs and benefits of an open door policy.

Many “native” North Carolinians believed that “illegals” were flaunting the law. Elected officials joined the fray, stirring anti-immigrant sentiment to pursue political agendas. Sheriff Terry Johnson of Alamance County said that “In Mexico, there's nothing wrong with having sex with a 12-, 13-year-old girl... They do a lot

of drinking down in Mexico.”²⁶ Sheriff Steve Bizzell of Johnston County said that “Mexicans are trashy” and that “illegals... breed like rabbits.”²⁷ These are not the comments of anonymous bloggers, but of publicly elected – and re-elected – officials.

Following the failure of comprehensive immigration reform at the national level in 2006 and 2007, some local and state elected officials have taken matters into their own hands, harming immigrant communities across the state.

Hitting Home: Local Immigration Enforcement

The past several years have witnessed a sharp increase in local enforcement of federal immigration laws. Immigrant communities are living increasingly in a state of fear and insecurity due to programs in which local law enforcement agencies are actively participating in enforcing federal immigration laws. These programs have led to the deportation of thousands of undocumented immigrants statewide since they began in North Carolina in 2006. North Carolina has more of these agreements than most other states. Eight local law enforcement agencies have signed 287(g) agreements with Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), under which local officers have been authorized to act as immigration agents. Several North Carolina counties are pilot counties for “Secure Communities,” under which the fingerprints of everyone arrested are run through ICE’s biometric databases. “Secure Communities” is slated to spread to all 100 North Carolina counties and Governor Beverly Perdue has called for 287(g) to spread state-wide as well.

While both 287(g) and “Secure Communities” were publicized as programs to arrest and deport dangerous felons, such as human traffickers and drug dealers, the few statistics that are available have shown that the majority of those deported were picked up for driving-related and other minor offenses.²⁸ According to the North Carolina Sheriff’s Association, a full *one-third* of those deported in 2008 under 287(g) statewide were arrested for motor vehicle-related offenses other than DUI. In Wake County, even crime *victims* have been deported when law enforcement agents learned that they were undocumented. These local enforcement strategies can actually have negative impacts on overall commu-

nity security, when immigrants are afraid to report crimes.

Grassroots opposition to these programs has begun to grow. Orange and Chatham counties have both passed resolutions opposing their involvement in these programs, citing costs and the fear that they are being used in ways that could lead to racial profiling.

Elsewhere, some county commissioners and state legislators, using a “theory of attrition,” are attempting to make life as difficult as possible for immigrants so that they will move away voluntarily. English-only ordinances (which discriminate against citizens and legal permanent residents) and laws that fine landlords who rent to undocumented people (which invite discrimination against anyone who looks or sounds “foreign”) are only two examples of this approach.

Conclusion

The debate about immigration policy – and immigrants themselves – continues to boil across North Carolina. In the midst of this heated conversation, people of faith have begun to take a stand for immigrant rights. Hundreds of churches are involved in Hispanic/Latino ministry. Religious leaders are voicing their opposition to discriminatory and punitive anti-immigrant measures. Faith-based advocacy groups and ministries are forming alliances across racial and socio-economic boundaries to encourage society to “welcome the stranger.”

The North Carolina Religious Coalition for Justice for Immigrants continues to mobilize people of faith across the state to offer a public message of hospitality in the face of hostility. To date, hundreds of clergy have signed onto a statement that affirms that while “immigration policy is complex and multi-faceted, we agree that all immigrants are made in God's image and that our religious traditions demand that we care especially for the stranger. We call on all people of faith to stand with immigrants as a matter of religious responsibility, to advocate for their well-being and protection, and to educate our local communities about issues affecting immigrant peoples.”

Chapter 6

THE PROPHETIC VOICE: THE RELIGIOUS COMMUNITY RESPONDS

By Rev. Jessica Vazquez Torres and Hollen Reischer

The New Colossus

*Not like the brazen giant of Greek fame,
With conquering limbs astride from land to land;
Here at our sea-washed, sunset fates shall stand
A mighty woman with a torch, whose flame
Is the imprisoned lightning, and her name
Mother of Exiles. From her beacon-hand
Glows world-wide welcome; her mild eyes command
The air-bridged harbor that twin cities frame.
“Keep, ancient lands, your storied pomp!” cries she
With silent lips. “Give me your tired, your poor,
Your huddled masses yearning to breathe free,
The wretched refuse of your teeming shore.
Send these, the homeless, tempest-tost to me,
I lift my lamp beside the golden door!”²⁹*

The words of the Emma Lazarus poem were engraved on a bronze plaque hung in the Statue of Liberty museum twenty years after her death. To many, the verse expressed the governing U.S. attitude toward immigrants at the time: welcome. The story of our national struggles with immigration is not new. Yes, historically we have welcomed those tired and huddled masses Lazarus refers to in *The New Colossus*. But this welcome is only part of the story.

The 1790 Immigration and Naturalization Act codified citizenship for “free white persons.” This law, which would remain in effect until 1952, defined and circumscribed our national identity for decades. By limiting whose rights would be guaranteed and protected by our policies and constitution, this law created chasms between peoples struggling to survive and thrive: new European immigrants, the Native Americans whose land had been invaded, the African slaves on whose back the economy rested, the Chinese

whose labor was used to connect our coasts and every other group who would cross our borders for decades to come. The religious community was both an active supporter and resister of the anti-immigrant policy that stemmed from the 1790 Act.³⁰ It would be irresponsible to pretend otherwise. Religious people and communities at times have acted and spoken in ways that exclude, marginalize, and declare to others that the physical and social boundaries of our nation are closed to them. The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America articulates this reality in the following manner:

We also recognize the obstacles and difficulties our church and society face in welcoming newcomers. Too often we are slow in, tire of, or even resist fostering a hospitable environment for newcomers. Too often we perpetuate the racism, the fear of, and the animosity toward newcomers to our society. Our country's history exhibits an ugly strain of exclusionary attitudes and policies toward newcomers who differ from the majority. In times of economic downturns especially—as happened in the early 1990s—this strain becomes more pervasive and leads to laws that unduly restrict immigration and threaten the well-being of newcomers.³¹

But religious communities and individuals have also struggled to ensure that the soul stirring words of Emma Lazarus would remain true for generations to come. The religious community has played an important role in the story of struggle for justice in this nation including:

- John Wesley speaking against the Christianization of Native Americans in 1746.
- People of faith opposing slavery and providing support for the Underground Railroad.
- Actively opposing the Japanese internment camps in the 1940s, to actively opposing the Arab/Middle Eastern internment camps of the 2000s.
- Standing alongside African Americans and other people of color in the struggle for civil rights, to opening up doors in sanctuary for Central and South American refugees.

- Standing with low-wage workers demanding the right to collective bargaining, to marching with millions demanding just immigration reform.

The religious community has, within its teachings and readings, a profound tradition of welcome and hospitality. In July 2006, interfaith leaders from across the U.S. signed a statement in support of just and comprehensive immigration reform. In the statement's opening they wrote:

The Hebrew Bible tells us: "The strangers who sojourn with you shall be to you as the natives among you, and you shall love them as yourself; for you were strangers in the land of Egypt (Leviticus 19:33-34)." In the New Testament, Jesus tells us to welcome the stranger (cf. Matthew 25:35), for "what you do to the least of my brethren, you do unto me (Matthew 25:40)." The Qur'an tells us that we should "serve God...and do good to...orphans, those in need, neighbors who are near, neighbors who are strangers, the companion by your side, the wayfarer that you meet, [and those who have nothing] (4:36)." The Hindu scripture Taittiriya Upanishad tells us: "The guest is a representative of God (1.11.2)."

It is undeniable that as religious people and communities we are called to witness a level of hospitality that recognizes the inherent worth and dignity of each person crossing our borders and shores. "We are a nation of immigrants. We have a history of welcoming immigrants. Not always treating them right when they come, but we welcome them because they add value and become an asset to the country," said Hussam Ayloush, Executive Director of Council on American Islamic Relations–Southern California and member of the board of directors of Interfaith Worker Justice.

The language and ideas inherent in our sacred traditions, particularly those of the prophetic tradition, provide us with resources for breaking through the predominant ideologies of our nation to imagine a new day, a more just society. They allow us to question the prevailing beliefs that would have us criminalize people struggling to live.³² Imam Al-Hajj Talib Abdur-Rashid reflects on the

demands of ministry to remain within the prophetic tradition:

The challenge of modern ministry is to reflect prophetic tradition in our actions, to reflect the prophetic voice in these times, and to engage communities of faith in a dynamic application of divine law to modern human problems that are in reality, eternal human problems. Further, it is to stand and to inspire the faith community to stand for true justice, and to comfort those in need who desire to speak truth to power and to organize themselves in opposition to those who would listen to the voice of Satan, counseling... abuse over compassion and selfish individualism over humanity. Our Creator is inspiring people to step forward and.... proclaim truth, proclaim justice in this time.³⁴

A principle theme of the prophetic tradition, exemplified in the Exodus story, is that God historically acts on the side of the oppressed, and those who are liberated by God's actions are further expected to practice justice.³⁵ Walter Brueggemann, in his book *The Prophetic Imagination*, asserts, "No prophets ever see things under the aspect of eternity. It is always partisan theology, always for the moment, always for the concrete community, satisfied to see only a piece of it all and to speak out of that at the risk of contradicting the rest of it."³⁶

As a prophetic presence, the religious community has the obligation to name and denounce the [material] idols before which we as a nation bow, to identify the power of sin present in social structures, and to advocate in hope with poor and powerless people. When religious or secular structures, ideologies, or authorities claim to be absolute, the religious community must speak.³⁷

For too long the immigration debate has been shaped by sensationalist media, characterized by disproportionate coverage of nativist groups screaming "alien invasion" and politicians claiming a misguided populist position that preys on the fears of the public. These parties have clothed themselves in the language of morality and patriotism while flagrantly disregarding the meaning of both. They spout language of good and evil, but fail to truly

engage issues of morality and ethics. They have failed to exhibit the kind of love for country that recognizes the need for humane borders and the right to work with dignity.

Now, more than ever, an alternative message is needed; one that both recognizes the human dimension of this debate and acknowledges that current and most proposed policies hurt all workers regardless of legal status. The religious community has an incredible opportunity, and is indeed compelled, to become the bearer of this message. Like prophets and teachers such as Moses, Jesus, Mohammed, Buddha and Rabbi Hillel, the religious community and people of faith must demand justice. We must oppose criminalizing people for seeking a better life and recognize that no human being is illegal. We must demand the elimination of militarized borders that leave scores of people dead and must fight for the right of every worker in this country to be

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

Is it the “American Way” (or, does it reflect our “Family Values”) to determine a person’s immigration status before we treat them with dignity and respect?

treated fairly and afforded the protections and wages that allow them to prosper. Ultimately, the religious community must remind itself of the commitments to justice, human dignity and respect for creation to which their traditions hold them.

Martin Luther King, Jr. in a “Letter from a Birmingham Jail” wrote about the white, liberal religious leaders:

I must make two honest confessions to you, my Christian and Jewish brothers. First, I must confess that over the past few years I have been gravely disappointed with the white moderate. I have almost reached the regrettable conclusion that the Negro’s great stumbling block in his stride toward freedom is not the White Citizen’s Council or the Ku Klux Klan, but the white moderate, who is more devoted to order than to justice; who prefers a negative peace which is the absence of tension to a positive peace which is the presence of justice; who constantly says: ‘I

agree with you in the goal you seek, but I cannot agree with your methods of direct action'; who paternalistically believes he can set the timetable for another man's freedom; who lives by a mythical concept of time and who constantly advises the Negro to wait for a 'more convenient season.' Shallow understanding from people of good will is more frustrating than absolute misunderstanding from people of ill will.³⁸

Now is the time for people of faith and values to passionately engage in the immigration debate. It is true that many declarations have been issued and statements released. Some religious communities have even taken official positions on the issue. However, the time for concrete action is upon us. Words are important but if the spoken words are not reflected in the actions of the community they are simply words and no more. Articulated positions must be accompanied by actions of solidarity and challenge.

United, the religious community in the U.S. has the capacity to change the focus of our nation's discourse on immigration and worker justice. But to do so, we must first come together, laying aside differences that could divide us and thus limit effectiveness. Then, we can strategize together how to respond to these four needs: understanding, solidarity, advocacy and organizing.

IMPORTANT QUOTES

They came first for the Communists, and I didn't speak up because I wasn't a Communist. Then they came for the Jews, and I didn't speak up because I wasn't a Jew. Then they came for the trade unionists, and I didn't speak up because I wasn't a trade unionist. Then they came for the Catholics, and I didn't speak up because I was a Protestant. Then they came for me, and by that time no one was left to speak up.

Pastor Martin Niemöller³³

Chapter 7

DYING TO LIVE: CHRISTIAN THEOLOGY, MIGRATION, AND THE HUMAN JOURNEY

By Daniel G. Groody, c.s.c.

A few years ago I was working in Mexico at a border outreach center that offered material and pastoral support to those on the move. Some were traveling northwards in search of better lives, and others had tried to enter the U.S. but failed and were deported back to Mexico. One day a group of forty immigrants arrived in the center, sojourners who had hoped to reach the U.S. It had been a long night for them – and an even longer week. For three days they had crossed through the Arizona desert in temperatures that reach 120 degrees in the shade. Amid the challenges of the desert terrain – their personal vulnerability to everything from heat stroke to poisonous snakes – they had braved a perilous journey and tried to make their way to the U.S., often under the cover of darkness. They walked remote and diffuse trails that have taken the lives of thousands of immigrants – an estimated 300-500 annually since 1994.

Why were they willing to take such risks and leave their home country? When I asked them, some said they had relatives back home who needed medication they could not afford. Others said the \$3-\$5 a day they earned for a twelve-hour work day in Mexico was not enough to put much more than beans and tortillas on the table. Still others said potato chips had become a luxury they could no longer afford, and they could not stand to look their children in the eyes when they complained of hunger.

The Desert Ordeal

“We are migrating not because we want to but because we have to,” said Mario. “My family at home depends on me. I’m already dead in Mexico, and getting to the U.S. gives us the hope of living, even though I may die.” But now they were back on the border after a week-long ordeal. While walking through the Arizona desert, they had suddenly heard a rumbling sound on the horizon.

Then a white laser-like light cut their world in two. Within moments a border patrol helicopter surrounded them and threw the group into chaos.

“So they circled around us and then rounded us up like we were cattle,” said Maria. “I said, no, dear God ... I’ve gone through so much sacrifice to come this far ... please don’t let them send us back where we came from.”

“It was an awful night,” added Gustavo. “But the worst part was when they started playing the song, ‘La Cucaracha’ over the helicopter intercom. I never felt so humiliated in my life, like I was the lowest form of life of earth, like I wasn’t even a human being.”

The story of Mario, Maria and Gustavo gives witness to their particular journey across the U.S.-Mexico border, but its dynamics are universal in scope. Today there are more than 200 million people migrating around the world, or one out of every thirty-five people on the planet, which is equivalent to the population of Brazil. Some 30-40 million of these are undocumented, 24 million are internally displaced and about 10 million are refugees.³⁹ For many reasons some scholars refer to these days as the “age of migration,” touching every area of human life.⁴⁰ The immigration issue underscores not only conflict at geographical borders but the turbulent crossroads between national security and human insecurity, national sovereign rights and human rights, civil law and natural law, and citizenship and discipleship.⁴¹

Amid these contentious debates, much has been written about the social, political, economic, cultural dimensions of immigration. But surprisingly very little has been written from a theological perspective, even less from the vantage point of the immigrants themselves. Yet the theme of migration is as old as the Scriptures. From the call of Abraham to the Exodus from Egypt, from Israel’s wandering in the desert to their experience of exile, from the holy family’s flight into Egypt to the missionary activity of the Church, the very identity of the People of God is inextricably intertwined with stories of movement, risk and hospitality.

Broken Borders: God's Migration

But what exactly can theology offer to this complex issue of immigration? Here I will highlight three Christian themes that touch directly on the migration debate and help us understand that crossing borders is at the heart of human life, divine revelation and Christian identity. These three areas are the *Imago Dei* (the Image of God), the *Verbum Dei* (the Word of God) and the *Missio Dei* (the Mission of God).⁴²

The notion of the *Imago Dei* emerges in the earliest pages of Scripture. We read in the first creation account that human beings are created in God's image and likeness (Gen 1:26-27). No text is more foundational or more significant in its implication for the immigration debate. It reveals that immigration is not just about a

IMPORTANT QUOTES

The Imago Dei insists that we see immigrants not as problems to be solved but people to be healed and empowered.

Daniel Groody

political "problem" but about real people. The *Imago Dei* is the core symbol of human dignity, the infinite worth of every human being, and the divine attributes that are part of every human life, including

will, memory, emotions, understanding, and the capacity to love and enter into relationship with others.

Listening to stories of immigrants along the U.S.-Mexico border, as well as the borders between Slovakia-Ukraine, Malta-Libya, and others, I have discovered that a common denominator around the world among all who migrate is their experience of dehumanization.

I recently was speaking with a group of refugees in the Spanish-occupied territory of Ceuta on the Moroccan coast. They took me up to the mountains to meet some people from India, who were hiding out in cardboard shacks in the mountains. The only place available to them was a small plot of land, where they built a cardboard shack, located above an animal shelter that had hundreds of dogs, which barked all through the night. "Even many of the animals here live better than we do here," said one refugee, part of a group from India that was seeking work in the European Un-

ion. "It is as if we are worth nothing to the people who live here, and if we die, it won't matter."

The insults they endure are not just a direct assault on their pride but on their very existence. Their vulnerability and sense of meaninglessness weigh heavily on them; they often feel that the most difficult part of being an immigrant is to be no one to anyone. The *Imago Dei* brings to the forefront the human costs embedded in the immigration equation, and it challenges a society more oriented towards profit than people to accept that the economy should be made for people and not people for the economy. It is a reminder that the moral health of an economy is measured by how well the most vulnerable are faring.⁴³ The *Imago Dei* insists that we see immigrants not as problems to be solved but people to be healed and empowered.

Crossing Borders: Jesus the Refugee

The second theological notion that is central to the immigration debate is the *Verbum Dei*. It declares that God in Jesus crosses the divide that exists between divine life and human life. In the incarnation God migrates to the human race and, as Karl Barth notes, makes his way into the "far country."⁴⁴ This far country is one of human discord and disorder, a place of division and dissension, a territory marked by death and the demeaning treatment of human beings.

The Gospel of Matthew says God in Jesus not only takes on human flesh and migrates into our world but actually becomes a refugee himself when he and his family flee political persecution and escape into Egypt (Matt 2:13-15). The divine takes on not just any human narrative but that of the most vulnerable among us. This movement toward the human race takes place not on the strength of any human initiative or human accomplishment but through divine gratuity. Walking the way of the cross, overcoming the forces of death that threaten human life, Jesus gives hope to all who go through the agony of economic injustice, family separation, cultural uprootedness, and even a premature and painful death. Certainly migrants who cross the deserts in search of more dignified lives see in the Jesus story their own story: he opens up a reason to hope despite the most hopeless of circumstances.

What impresses me most in speaking to migrants in the midst of their arduous journey is their ability to believe in God even in the most godless of situations. They speak about trusting in God even after all has been taken away, and they affirm God's goodness even when their lot has been marked by such suffering and pain.

Beyond Borders: Civilization of Love

A third notion from theology that gives us a different way of understanding immigration is the *Missio Dei*. The mission of the Church is to proclaim a God of life and make our world more human by building up, in Pope Paul VI's words, the "civilization of love." In imitation of Jesus, it seeks to make real the practice of table fellowship. The significance of Jesus' table fellowship with sinners and social outcasts is that he crosses over the human borders that divide one human being from another. If the incarnation is about God crossing over the divine-human divide, the mission

of the Church is to cross the human-human divide. It is fundamentally a mission of reconciliation, a realization that the borders that define countries may have some proximate value but are not ultimately those that define the body of Christ.

One of the most remarkable ritual expressions of this unity takes place each year near El Paso, Texas. In the dry, rugged, sun-scorched terrain where many immigrants lose their lives, bishops, priests, and lay people come together annually to

celebrate the Eucharist. Like at other liturgies, they pray and worship together. Unlike other liturgies, a sixteen-foot high iron fence divides this community in half, with one side in Mexico and the other in the U.S. Amid a desert of death and a culture of fear, this Eucharist is not just a tool for activism or social reform but a testi-

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

How does your faith tradition speak about the *Imago Dei*?

What stories from your faith tradition speak to the themes of hospitality and welcoming the "other"?

In your experience, how does a practice like celebrating the Lord's Supper unite people across society's divisions?

In what ways does theology offer, as Daniel Groody says, "not just more information but a new imagination"?

mony of God's universal, undivided, and unrestricted love for all people. It speaks of the gift and challenge of Christian faith and the call to feed the world's hunger for peace, justice and reconciliation. In uniting people beyond the political constructions that divide us, it gives tangible expression to the moral demands of the Kingdom of God, the ethical possibilities of global solidarity, and the Christian vision of a journey of hope.

Immigration is arguably the most challenging issue of the new century, but this need not blind us to the core issues that lie at the heart of every one of us. How we respond to those most in need says more about who we are individually and collectively than it does about those on the move. Theology supplies a way of thinking about migration that keeps the human issues at the center of the debate and reminds us that our own existence as a pilgrim people is migratory in nature.

Theology offers not just more information but a new imagination, one that reflects at its core what it means to be human before God and to live together in community. In seeking to overcome all that divides us in order to reconcile us in all our relationships, Christian discipleship reminds us that the more difficult walls to cross are the ones that exist in the hearts of each of us. Unable to cross this divide by ourselves, Christian faith rests ultimately in the one who migrated from heaven to earth, and through his death and resurrection, passed over from death to life. From a Christian perspective, the ones who are truly alienated are those who have so disconnected themselves from their neighbor in need that they fail to see in the eyes of the stranger a mirror of themselves, the image of Christ (Matt 25:31-46), and the call to human solidarity.

Read:

- *Crossing Over: A Mexican Family on the Migrant Trail* by Ruben Martinez
- *Enrique's Journey: The Story of a Boy's Dangerous Odyssey to Reunite with His Mother* by Sonia Nazario



Source: Bryan Langdoc

Worshippers share the Eucharist through the fence at the U.S.-Mexico border (Border Field State Park, San Diego, California). This worship service took place as part of World Communion Sunday, celebrated by Christians around the world as a sign of unity and peace in the midst of division and fear. The fence at this park has been replaced with large concrete barriers. Bryan Langdoc, a pastor at nearby Light and Life Church, said later: “Where I once received the broken body of Christ through a chain-linked fence from the hands of a Mexican pastor, I can now stare at a giant wall. And as many times as I say ‘The peace of Christ be with you,’ I can no longer hear the reply.”

Chapter 8

CONCLUSION: A CUP OF COLD WATER

By Maria Teresa Palmer

In the book of Matthew, chapter 10 highlights the importance of hospitality among the faithful. It took courage and commitment for the persecuted Christian community of the 1st century to offer hospitality to prophets and preachers, so Matthew reminds his readers that they are ministering to Jesus himself in welcoming his disciples and brothers and sisters in the faith who might come from unknown places. The verses before our focus passage give us an idea of why this might be such risky business: “Do not think that I have come to bring peace to the world. No, I did not come to bring peace, but a sword. I came to set sons against their fathers, daughters against their mothers...” (Matthew 10:34).

As a mother, and even as a pastor, I want to forget the context and move quickly to verse 40 to talk about the joy of Christian fellowship, but this doesn't do justice to the text, especially when we read this passage in light of the topic of immigration. Offering Christian hospitality to the immigrants among us is about as controversial today as welcoming a Christian prophet was under Roman rule. I performed a marriage in the home of an Anglo middle-class family whose daughter was marrying a young Hispanic man. It was a small ceremony, due to the lack of approval of their church and family. The parents had to choose between welcoming their new son-in-law and enjoying the fellowship of their extended family and Christian community.

I know of six churches in North Carolina where the result of ministering to immigrants has cost the pastors their jobs, split the congregation, or divided families. I also have a colleague, pastor of a thriving Hispanic ministry, who has been asked to find another home for his congregation because the mother church doesn't want to “inadvertently aid illegals.”

If I had not lived it through many years of ministry, I wouldn't believe that church people could behave so unwelcomingly. But of course many other groups have known this truth for decades:

the church can be very un-Christ-like.

Perhaps, in some congregations, it's more a sin of omission: we don't notice the "alien" among us and forget to be hospitable. We forget to be intentional about our welcome. But the message we

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

What does your faith or value system teach about justice, welcoming and the human rights of each individual?

How have you seen these values carried out or ignored in your faith community or in public life?

Have you ever paid a great cost—for example, loss of friends or privileges or division among members of your community—because you stood up for justice?

Why might some people or institutions move in the direction of rejection rather than welcome?

present to the foreign visitor is clearly conveyed by how we behave when a newcomer ventures into our congregations: We demand that they adopt our cultural norms—fill out the contact forms, keep their kids quiet and off our new carpet, learn our language and our hymns, pledge allegiance to the flag, volunteer for Vacation Bible School, contribute to the capital campaign — and then maybe they can earn that glass of water.

The cup of water that Matthew asks us to offer is a dangerous thing. It assumes we have looked at our visitor and noticed his or her thirst. We are willing to be inconvenienced, to go to the well and draw the pure clean water and offer it in hospitality—which might lead us to pulling out a chair and inquiring about the rest of the family. It might lead to prayer, to phone calls, and being drawn into this person's life. It could lead to learning about his or her fears and hopes, and we might find ourselves praying with Solomon: "God, when a foreigner comes to this place because of your great name... listen to his prayer." And what then? If God responded to all those prayers, we might have to change our immigration laws, our foreign policy...

The U.S. government, regardless of many politicians' claims to the contrary, does not hold itself to biblical standards of behavior. Leviticus 24:22 clearly calls us to have "one law for the alien and for the citizen," but our courts have said that labor protection laws do not apply to "aliens." The courts interpret what is right or wrong in light of existing (and ever-changing) legislation dictated by the political climate.

The Christian church, however, is not free to decide what biblical teachings are expedient. All through the Hebrew Bible the prophets call us to treat the foreigner with justice and compassion. Jesus calls us to treat foreigners with the concern and love we would show him. Throughout the New Testament we are reminded to show hospitality to the stranger, to help meet the basic needs of those who are new and needy among us: to notice their thirst, their loneliness, and their need for Christian fellowship; to respond to their arrival as if Christ himself were at our door. May God give us the courage to be the first ones to set up the welcome table and pour the water.



Source: Chris Liu-Beers

At a press conference in Raleigh,
religious leaders call on North Carolinians
to treat all immigrants with dignity and respect.



Source: Interfaith Worker Justice

Interfaith Worker Justice (IWJ) is a network of people of faith that calls upon religious values in order to educate, organize, and mobilize the religious community in the United States on issues and campaigns that will improve wages, benefits, and conditions for workers, and give voice to workers, especially workers in low-wage jobs.

IWJ envisions the religious community, acting on its values in creative and strategic ways, as a powerful leader in creating and sustaining a nation where all workers share in the prosperity of our society, enjoy the fundamental human right to organize, and lead dignified lives as a result of their labor.

Visit IWJ online at: www.iwj.org.

Appendix A

WORSHIP RESOURCES

Interfaith Prayers

REMEMBER THE IMMIGRANT
A CALL-AND-RESPONSE PRAYER
BY INTERFAITH WORKER JUSTICE

We serve a God who directs us to care especially for those most vulnerable in society. Our scriptures tell us of God’s special concern for the “alien” or the “stranger,” or as more contemporary translations say—the immigrant.

For the Lord our God is God of gods and Lord of lords, the great God, mighty and awesome, who shows no partiality and accepts no bribes. God defends the cause of the orphan and the widow and loves the immigrant, giving the immigrant food and clothing. And we are to love those who are immigrants, for God’s people were immigrants in Egypt.
(Deuteronomy 10:17-19)

We ask God to open our eyes to the struggles of immigrant workers, for we know that

We must not take advantage of a hired worker who is poor and needy, whether the worker is a resident or immigrant living in our town. We must pay the worker the wages promptly because the worker is poor and counting on it.
(Deuteronomy 24:14)

God’s desire is that those who build houses may live in them,

And that those who plant may eat. *(Isaiah 65:22)*

And yet we know this is not possible for many in our midst.

We know of: farmworkers who cannot feed their families; construction workers who have no homes; nursing home

workers who have no health care; restaurant workers who could not afford a meal in the restaurant.

We know that too many immigrant workers among us are not receiving the fruits of their labor, nor the justice required by the courts.

God charges our judges to hear disputes and judge fairly, whether the case involves citizens or immigrants.
(Deuteronomy 1:16)

But our laws do not adequately protect immigrants. Our legal and social service programs exclude many immigrants. Our education programs undervalue immigrant children.

God tells us that the community is to have the same rules for citizens and for immigrants living among us. This is a lasting ordinance for the generations to come. Citizens and immigrants shall be the same before the Lord. *(Numbers 15:15)*

When an immigrant lives in our land,

We will not mistreat him or her. We will treat an immigrant as one of our native born. We will love an immigrant as ourselves, for God's people were once immigrants in Egypt.
(Leviticus 19:33-34)

To those who employ immigrant workers, we lift up God's command:

Do not oppress an immigrant. God's people know how it feels to be immigrants because they were immigrants in Egypt.
(Exodus 23: 9)

And a special word to those who employ immigrant farmworkers:

Make sure immigrants get a day of rest. *(Exodus 23:12)*

To those who craft our immigration laws and policies, we lift up God's command:

Do not deprive the immigrant or the orphan of justice, or take the cloak of the widow as a pledge. Remember that God's people were slaves in Egypt and the Lord our God redeemed them from there. (Deuteronomy 24:17-18)

To all of us who seek to do God's will, help us to:

Love one another as God has loved us. Help us to treat immigrants with the justice and compassion that God shows to each of us.

A PRAYER FOR IMMIGRANTS

BY REV. JESSICA VAZQUEZ TORRES

**Source of Life who is known by many names;
Over-turner and illuminator of hearts;**

We gather with gratitude for the earth and all who journey in it.
We give thanks for the interconnectedness of all creation.

**Support for those without support;
Stronghold of those without protection;**

We declare openly the times we have fallen short
From living out the call to justice our sacred stories place upon us;
From recognizing the whole of creation as an extension of our being;
From hearing the plight of the creation yearning for justice;
From seeing the harm our way of life and our policies inflict upon the creation.

**Source of Wisdom who is known by many names;
The Prophet Mohammed asks: What actions are most excellent?**

To gladden the heart of a human being;
To feed the hungry;
To help the afflicted;

To lighten the sorrow of the sorrowful;
To remove the wrongs of the injured;

Let us not forget.

The Psalmist asks: Who is fit to hold power and worthy to act in God's place?

Those with a passion for the truth, who are horrified by injustice;
Who act with mercy to the poor and take up the cause of the help-
less;
Who have let go of selfish concerns and see the whole creation as
sacred.

Let us not forget.

**Jesus, carpenter of Nazareth, asks: What is the greatest com-
mandment?**

To love your creator;
To love your neighbor;
To undermine oppressive powers with lifegiving actions;
To be in solidarity with all who suffer;
To act for justice;
And to teach others to act for justice

Let us not forget.

Source of Justice who is known by many names;

Let us not swerve from the path of righteousness that leads to just
and equitable relationship.

**Open our eyes that we may see the immigrant and undocu-
mented;**

Whose labor enables and sustains our living;
The farmworker, the hotel maid, the line cook, the childcare pro-
vider, the healthcare worker;

Give us the courage to stand with those crossing our borders;

Escaping economic oppression and political persecution;
Seeking work to support their families;

Aspiring to participate in the bounty of the creation;

Give us the strength to confront the prejudice and intolerance of those who are fearful;

And respond by closing our borders to those who sojourn seeking life and opportunity;

Give us the will to leave behind the safety of our sanctuaries and temples;

And claim our place in the movement to transform the creation;
That our voice, our heart, our spirit will join the voice, heart and spirit of all who demand to live with respect, justice and peace.

**Source of Direction who is known by many names;
In our daily living let us be guided;**

By the highest estimate of the worth and dignity of every person regardless of their legal status;

And let us not forget;

That the creation is founded on justice;
And that we have the moral responsibility to bring forth justice into these times.

May it be so.

SAMPLE INTERCESSIONS

The following intercessions may all be used together for a special liturgy, or particular intercessions may be chosen for use throughout the liturgical year.

For an end to the violence and poverty that displace so many people from their homes and homelands, we pray to the Lord.

Response: Lord, hear our prayer.

For our leaders, that they may implement policies that allow for safe migration, just migrant working conditions, and an end to the detention of asylum seekers, while protecting our national safety, we pray to the Lord.

Response: Lord, hear our prayer.

For migrant workers, that they may labor in safe and just conditions, and that we who benefit from their labor may be truly grateful for what they provide, we pray to the Lord.

Response: Lord, hear our prayer.

For unaccompanied migrant children, that they may be protected from all harm and reunited with loving families, we pray to the Lord.

Response: Lord, hear our prayer.

For an end to human trafficking, that the dignity of all of God's children will be protected, we pray to the Lord.

Response: Lord, hear our prayer.

For migrants, refugees, and strangers in our midst, that they may find hope in our concern for justice and feel the warmth of our love, we pray to the Lord.

Response: Lord, hear our prayer.

For our community, gathered here today to celebrate our unity under God, that we may come to greater understanding and acceptance of our differences, we pray to the Lord.

Response: Lord, hear our prayer.

For all those who are overwhelmed by loneliness, poverty, and despair, that they may be comforted through our help and kindness, we pray to the Lord.

Response: Lord, hear our prayer.

For those in special need, that the Lord in his divine mercy may heal the sick, comfort the dying, and keep travelers safe, we pray to the Lord.

Response: Lord, hear our prayer.

A PRAYER FOR IMMIGRANTS

BY JUSTICE FOR IMMIGRANTS

Our God, you have given us in your word the stories of persons who needed to leave their homelands—
Abraham, Sarah, Ruth, Moses.

Help us to remember that when we speak of immigrants and refugees, we speak of Christ.

In the One who had no place to lay his head, and in the least of his brothers and sisters, you come to us again, a stranger seeking refuge.

We confess that we often turn away.

You have chosen that the life of Jesus be filled with events of unplanned travel and flight from enemies.

You have shown us through the modeling of Jesus how we are called to relate to persons from different nations and cultures.

You have called us to be teachers of your word.

We ask you, our God, to open our minds and hearts to the challenge and invitation to model your perfect example of love.
Amen.

Appendix B

HISTORICAL CHRONOLOGY: CHANGES IN U.S. IMMIGRATION AND NATURALIZATION LAWS

1790: Naturalization is authorized for “free white persons” who have resided in the United States for at least two years and swear loyalty to the U.S. Constitution. The racial requirement would remain on the federal books until 1952, although naturalization was opened to certain Asian nationalities in the 1940s.

1798: The Alien and Sedition Acts authorize the President to deport any foreigner deemed to be dangerous and make it a crime to speak, write or publish anything “of a false, scandalous and malicious nature” about the President or Congress. An amended Naturalization Act imposes a 14-year residency requirement for prospective citizens; in 1802, Congress reduces the waiting period to five years, a provision that remains today.

1819: Reporting Rule adopted. Data begin to be collected on immigration into the U.S. Ship captains and others are required to keep and submit manifests of immigrants entering the U.S.

1875: First exclusionary act. Convicts, prostitutes and coolies (Chinese contract laborers) are barred from entry into the U.S.

1882: The Chinese Exclusion Act suspends immigration by Chinese laborers for 10 years; the measure would be extended and tightened in 1892 and a permanent ban enacted in 1902. This marks the first time the United States has restricted immigration on the basis of race or national origin. In addition, a tax is levied on newly arriving immigrants.

1885: Contract laborers entry barred. This new legislation reverses an earlier federal law legalizing the trade in contract labor.

1891: To the list of undesirables ineligible for immigration, Congress adds polygamists, “persons suffering from a loathsome or a dangerous contagious disease,” and those convicted of “a misde-

meanor involving moral turpitude.” Also, the Office of Immigration is created. (Now known as U.S. Citizenship & Immigration Services.)

1892: Ellis Island opens. Between 1892 and 1953, more than 12 million immigrants will be processed at this one facility.

1903: Additional categories are added for persons excluded. Epileptics, professional beggars and anarchists are now excluded.

1906: The first language requirement is adopted for naturalization: the ability to speak and understand English.

1907: Exclusions are further broadened: “Imbeciles, the feeble-minded, tubercular persons, persons with physical or mental defects” and persons under 16 without parents are excluded.

1907-8: Under a so-called “Gentlemen’s Agreement,” the United States promises not to ban Japanese immigration in exchange for Japan’s pledge not to issue passports to Japanese laborers for travel to the continental United States (although they remain welcome to become agricultural workers in Hawaii). By a separate executive order, President Theodore Roosevelt prohibits secondary migration by Japanese from Hawaii to the mainland.

1917: Over President Wilson’s veto, Congress enacts a literacy requirement for all new immigrants: ability to read 40 words in some language. Most significant in limiting the flow of newcomers, it designates Asia as a “barred zone” (excepting Japan and the Philippines) from which immigration will be prohibited.

1921: A new form of immigration restriction is born: the national-origins quota system. Admissions from each European country will be limited to three percent of each foreign-born nationality in the 1910 census. The effect is to favor Northern Europeans at the expense of Southern and Eastern Europeans. Immigration from Western Hemisphere nations remains unrestricted; most Asians will continue to face exclusion.

1924: Restrictionists' decisive stroke, the Johnson-Reed Act, embodies the principle of preserving America's "racial" composition. Immigration quotas will be based on the ethnic makeup of the U.S. population as a whole in 1920. The new national-origins quota system is even more discriminatory than the 1921 version. "America must be kept American," says President Coolidge as he signs the bill into law. Another provision bans all immigration by persons "ineligible to citizenship"— primarily affecting the Japanese.

1927: Immigration Ceiling Further Reduced. The annual immigration ceiling is further reduced to 150,000; the quota is revised to two percent of each nationality's representation in the 1920 census. This basic law remains in effect through 1965.

1929: National Origins Act. The annual immigration ceiling of 150,000 is made permanent, with 70 percent of admissions slated for those coming from Northern and Western Europe, while the other 30 percent are reserved for those coming from Southern and Eastern Europe.

1943: To appease a wartime ally, a token quota (105) is created for Chinese immigration. Yet unlike white immigrants, whose quotas depend on country of residence, all persons of "Chinese race" will be counted under the Chinese quota regardless of where they reside.

1948: Displaced Persons Act. Entry is allowed for 400,000 persons displaced by World War II. However, such refugees must pass a security check and have proof of employment and housing that does not threaten U.S. citizens' jobs and homes.

1950: The Internal Security Act, enacted over President Truman's veto, bars admission to any foreigner who might engage in activities "which would be prejudicial to the public interest, or would endanger the welfare or safety of the United States." It excludes or permits deportation of non-citizens who belong to the U.S. Communist Party or whose future activities might be "subversive to the national security."

1952: The McCarran-Walter Act retains the national-origins quota system and “internal security” restrictions, despite Truman’s opposition. For the first time, however, Congress sets aside minimum annual quotas for all countries, opening the door to numerous nationalities previously kept out on racial grounds. Naturalization now requires ability to read and write, as well as speak and understand, English.

1965: The United States finally eliminates racial criteria from its immigration laws. Eastern European countries receive annual quotas up to 20,000, under an overall ceiling of 170,000. Up to 120,000 may emigrate from Western Hemisphere nations, which are still not subject to country quotas (an exception Congress would eliminate in 1976).

1978: World-wide immigration ceiling introduced. A new annual immigration ceiling of 290,000 replaces the separate ceilings for the Eastern and Western Hemispheres.

1980: Refugee Act. A system is developed to handle refugees as a class separate from other immigrants. Under the new law, refugees are defined as those who flee a country because of persecution “on account of race, religion, nationality or political opinion.” The president, in consultation with Congress, is authorized to establish an annual ceiling on the number of refugees who may enter the United States. The president also is allowed to admit any group of refugees in an emergency. At the same time, the annual ceiling on traditional immigration is lowered to 270,000.

1986: The Immigration Reform and Control Act regularizes the status of approximately three million undocumented residents. For the first time, the law punishes employers who hire persons who are here illegally. The aim of employer sanctions is to make it difficult for the undocumented to find employment. The law has a side effect: employment discrimination against those who look or sound “foreign.”

1990: Immigration Act of 1990. The annual immigration ceiling is further raised to 700,000 for 1992, 1993, and 1994; thereafter, the ceiling will drop to 675,000 a year. Ten thousand permanent resident visas are offered to those immigrants agreeing to invest at least \$1 million in U.S. urban areas or \$500,000 in U.S. rural areas. The McCarran-Walter Act of 1952 is amended so that people can no longer be denied admittance to the United States on the basis of their beliefs, statements or associations.

1994: The Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) is passed by Congress to allow spouses and children of United States citizens or lawful permanent residents (LPR) to self-petition to obtain LPR status. The immigration provisions of VAWA allow certain battered immigrants to file for immigration relief without the abuser's assistance or knowledge, in order to seek safety and independence from the abuser.

1996: A persistent recession in the U.S. in the early 90s, among other reasons, leads to calls for new restrictions on immigration. The Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act is passed, toughening border enforcement, closing opportunities for undocumented immigrants to adjust their status, and making it more difficult to gain asylum. The law greatly expands the grounds for deporting even long-time lawful permanent residents. It strips immigrants of many due process rights and their access to the courts. New income requirements are established for sponsors of legal immigrants. In the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Act, Congress makes citizenship a condition of eligibility for public benefits for most immigrants.

1997: A new Congress mitigates some of the overly harsh restrictions passed by the previous Congress. In the Balanced Budget Agreement with the President, some public benefits are restored for some elderly and disabled immigrants who had been receiving them prior to the 1996 changes. With the Nicaraguan Adjustment and Central American Relief Act, Congress provides an opportunity for certain war refugees living in legal limbo to become permanent residents.

1998: Congress continues to mitigate some of the nativist provi-

sions passed by the Congress in 1996 by partially restoring access to public benefits for additional groups of legal immigrants. The Haitian Refugee Immigration Fairness Act resolves the legal limbo status of certain Haitian refugees, and allows them to become permanent residents. Responding to the pleas of powerful employer groups, Congress passes the American Competitiveness and Workforce Improvement Act, which significantly raises the number of skilled temporary foreign workers U.S. employers are allowed to bring to the U.S.

2000: Congress continues to move incrementally in a pro-immigrant direction, passing the compromise Legal Immigration Family Equity Act, which creates a narrow window for immigrants with family or employer sponsors to adjust to legal status in the U.S.; resolves the legal limbo of certain immigrants denied legalization in the mid-1980s; and provides temporary visas for certain family-sponsored immigrants waiting for their green cards. For the second time in three years, Congress significantly raises the ceiling for skilled temporary workers. The Child Citizenship Act grants automatic U.S. citizenship to foreign-born adopted children. The Victims of Trafficking and Violence Protection Act provides visas for trafficking and crime victims. Congress modifies the naturalization law to allow severely disabled immigrants to become citizens even if they cannot understand the Oath of Allegiance.

2001-2004: After the attacks on September 11, 2001, Congress enacts that USA PATRIOT Act, which expands the authority to detain, prosecute and remove foreigners suspected of terrorism. The executive branch issues a series of new regulations and policies targeting non-citizens. Immigration appeals are restricted, detention policies are expanded and the refugee resettlement system is temporarily halted while new security procedures are implemented.

Sources: Ellis Cose, *A Nation of Strangers: Prejudice, Politics, and the Populating of America* (New York: Morrow, 1992); James Crawford, *Hold Your Tongue: Bilingualism and the Politics of "English Only"* (Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley, 1992); Roger Daniels, *Asian America: Chinese and Japanese in the United States since 1950* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1988); John Higham, *Strangers in the Land: Patterns of American Nativism, 1860-1925*, 2d ed. (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1988); Maldwyn Allen Jones, *American Immigration*, 2d ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992); *The Close Up Foundation: U.S. Immigration Policy* www.closeup.org. Chronology originally prepared by James Crawford for the National Immigration Forum, 2003 and used with permission from Minnesota Advocates for Human Rights.

Glossary of Terms

Asylum:

Permission granted to reside in the U. S. to a person fleeing persecution in another country. Asylum seekers have fled their country because of personal danger, arrive in the United States without legal protection, and must prove a “credible fear of persecution” to receive an opportunity to seek legal protective status or asylum.

Guest worker programs:

Temporary workers admitted to the U.S. under one of more than 70 visa categories. Guest workers referenced in this report are mainly workers who came to the U. S. under one of three visa programs: H-2A (unlimited annual number of visas for seasonal farm workers), H-2B (66,000 nonagricultural visas for landscapers, roofers, laborers, meatpacking plant workers and others) and H-1B (85,000 professionally skilled workers, about 30 percent of whom perform work in the Information Technology sector).

Immigrant:

The two basic types of legal aliens are immigrants and non-immigrants. Immigrants or legal non-citizens are persons admitted as legal permanent residents (LPRs) of the United States. The conditions for the admission of immigrants are much more stringent than non-immigrants, and many fewer immigrants than non-immigrants are admitted. Once admitted, however, immigrants are subject to few restrictions; for example, they may accept and change employment, and may apply for U.S. citizenship through the naturalization process, generally after five years. Non-immigrants come to the United States temporarily for some particular purpose but do not remain permanently. There are many types of non-immigrants; students, temporary workers and visitors are some of the most common.

Legal Permanent Resident (LPR):

A person who has been granted permission to live in the U.S., but who is not yet a citizen. Also known as a green card holder.

North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA):

Treaty that went into effect in 1994 between the U.S., Mexico and Canada, facilitating the free movement of labor and capital and removing certain taxes, environmental laws and worker protections.

Nativist:

As used in this document, nativist refers to people who express or organize around anti-immigrant sentiment.

Refugee:

Under U.S. law, a person who has a well-founded fear of persecution in their country of nationality by reason of race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group or political opinion. Under the Refugee Act of 1980, persons whose asylum claim is approved can, after a year, apply for residence.

Regularize Status:

Permission granted to reside in the United States to people who once entered illegally or overstayed a temporary visa. People opposed to allowing certain undocumented workers to apply for permanent legal residence refer to the process as “amnesty.” The Government Accountability Office, the research arm of the U.S. Congress, prefers this more neutral term to the politically-charged term “amnesty.”

About the Authors

Kim Bobo founded Interfaith Worker Justice in 1996 and has since provided leadership and vision for building the organization and the movement for worker justice. She is co-author of *Organizing for Social Change*, the best-selling organizing manual in the country, and author of *Lives Matter: A Handbook for Christian Organizing*. Her new book, *Wage Theft in America: Why Millions of Working Americans Are Not Getting Paid - And What We Can Do About It*, was released in December 2008.

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Maria Teresa Palmer is the Director of the Multicultural Student Center at North Carolina A&T State University in Greensboro, NC. She brings many years of experience in education, having been a teacher, elementary school principal, pastor, university financial aid officer, career counselor, program administrator, and State Board of Education member. Dr. Palmer has worked for many years to build strong multicultural communities.

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Marty Rosenbluth is a staff attorney with Southern Coalition for Social Justice (SCSJ), where he coordinates the organization's immigrant rights work. He also heads efforts to integrate internal human rights standards and conventions into SCSJ's programs and work with clients. Prior to coming to SCSJ, Marty worked as a human rights researcher with Amnesty International-USA, trade union organizer, videographer and adjunct university professor. He is a graduate of Antioch College, Wayne State University and University of North Carolina School of Law.

Ted Smuckler directs Interfaith Worker Justice's Public Policy department. He brings more than 20 years of community organizing experience in the Chicago metropolitan area, working on issues such as affordable housing, school reform and parental leadership involvement, public safety and treatment for addicts. Ted studied social science research methods while in a Ph.D. program in organizational psychology.

Elisabeth Solomon has served as Senior Public Policy Analyst for Interfaith Worker Justice. Elisabeth has upwards of 15 years experience in research and public policy issue development. She monitored the implementation of Illinois' first wave of welfare reform for the Public Welfare Coalition resulting in an extensive report, *Beyond the Hype*, which was distributed to the Illinois Congressional members and used by reform advocates statewide.

Jessica Vazquez Torres has served as the National Religious Outreach Coordinator for Interfaith Worker Justice. She is an ordained minister with the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ). When asked why she dedicates her ministry to the transformation of social institutions she says, "So that my niece can experience a church community where her identity as a young Latina woman of Puerto Rican and Mexican descent are affirmed and nurtured."

Endnotes

¹ Spencer S. Hsuh and Krissah Williams, “Illegal Workers Arrested in 6-State ID Theft Sweep,” *New York Times*, December 13, 2006; “U.S. Uncovers Large-Scale Identity Theft Scheme Used By Illegal Aliens to Gain Employment at Nationwide Meat Processor,” *ICE Press Release*, December 13, 2006.

² See Appendix B for a detailed historical overview.

³ It was not until 1965 that a law was passed creating legal barriers to immigration from anywhere in the Western Hemisphere.

⁴ Jeffrey S. Passel, et al., “Undocumented Immigrants: Facts and Figures,” *Urban Institute Immigration Studies Program*, January 12, 2004.

⁵ Jeanne Batalova, “Spotlight on Legal Immigration to the United States,” *Migration Policy Institute*, August 1, 2006, based on data from *The Yearbook of Immigration Statistics*, published by the Department of Homeland Security’s Office of Immigration Statistics.

⁶ *National Immigration Law Center*, “Paying Their Way and Then Some: Facts About the Contributions of Immigrants to Economic Growth and Public Investment,” September 2006. Available at http://www.nilc.org/immspbs/research/immspaytheirway_2006-9-25.pdf

⁷ *National Immigration Law Center*, “Paying Their Way and Then Some,” op. cit.

⁸ Steve Goss, Social Security Administration’s Chief Actuary, quoted in Eduardo Porter, “Illegal Immigrants are Bolstering Social Security with Billions,” *New York Times*, April 5, 2005.

⁹ Statement of the Honorable Mark W. Everson, Commissioner, *Internal Revenue Service*, Testimony Before the House Committee on Ways and Means, July 26, 2006.

¹⁰ Exceptions include a) victims of trafficking, b) political refugees and asylum seekers, c) Cuban/Haitian entrants, d) battered spouses and children with a pending or approved self-petition for a visa or a petition filed on their behalf by a U.S. citizen or legal permanent resident (LPR).

¹¹ Medicaid is a federal health coverage program for economically indigent people that is co-funded by states. *National Immigration Law Center*, “Immigrant Rights Update: Access to Medicaid for Newborns of Immigrant Mothers,” Vol. 20, Issue 7, December 6, 2006.

¹² “Guide to Immigrant Eligibility for Federal Programs, LSC-Funded Legal Services,” revised July 2004, *National Immigration Law Center*.

¹³ RAND Corporation, “Immigrants and the Cost of Medical Care,” *Health Affairs*, November 2006.

¹⁴ Federal funding from Medicaid for emergency medical services has been available to help cover the costs of care for undocumented immigrants. Supplemental Medi-

caid payments are also made to hospitals that treat a disproportionate share of low-income patients. The Medicare Prescription Drug, Improvement, and Modernization Act of 2003 appropriated \$1 billion over fiscal years 2005 through 2008 for payments to hospitals and other providers for emergency services provided to undocumented and certain other immigrants.

¹⁵ GAO-04-733, "Illegal Alien Schoolchildren: Issues in Estimating State-by-State Costs," U.S. Government Accountability Office, June 2004.

¹⁶ Lawrence Mishel, et al., *Economic Policy Institute*, "The State of Working America 2004/2005," ILR Press, pp. 187-188.

¹⁷ *Interfaith Worker Justice*, "Working on Faith: A Faithful Response to Worker Abuse in New Orleans," available at www.iwj.org.

¹⁸ *Globalization and the American South*, ed. James C. Cobb and William Stueck (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 2005), 71.

¹⁹ Jeffrey S. Passel, Pew Hispanic Center, "Estimates of the Size and Characteristics of the Undocumented Population," available at <http://pewhispanic.org/files/reports/44.pdf>.

²⁰ Economic Policy Institute (April 2001). *NAFTA's Impact on the States: EPI Briefing Paper*. Retrieved March 25, 2009 from <http://www.epi.org/pages/briefingpapers NAFTA01 impactstates/>.

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²³ NC Growers Association (2004). *Growers and Union Partner for a Progressive New Deal*. Retrieved on March 25, 2009 from <http://www.nfwm.org/pdf/boycotts/nca.pdf>.

²⁴ Student Action with Farmworkers (2007). *Facts About North Carolina Farmworkers*. Retrieved March 25, 2009 from <http://www.saf-unite.org/pdfs/SAF%20NC%20rev.pdf>.

²⁵ *Raleigh News & Observer*, "Welcome, newcomers," August 10, 1995.

²⁶ Kristin Collins, "Sheriffs help feds deport illegal aliens," *Raleigh News & Observer*, April 22, 2007.

²⁷ Kristin Collins, "Tolerance wears thin," *Raleigh News & Observer*, September 7, 2008.

²⁸ Barry Smith, "Most immigration detainees brought in on minor traffic violations," *Burlington Times-News*, July 5, 2008.

²⁹ Emma Lazarus, "The New Colossus," 1883.

³⁰ See Appendix B.

³¹ "Message on Immigration," approved by the Board of the Division for Church in Society and adopted by the Church Council of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America on November 16, 1998.

³² Warren Adams-Leavitt, "Ideology and the Prophetic Tradition," available at www.piconetwork.org/linkedddocuments/Adams-LeavittArticle.pdf.

³³ German pastor Martin Niemöller is said to have written this poem in 1976, as he reflected on the apathy of German intellectuals to stand up to the rise of Nazi power. Originally a supporter of Hitler, Niemöller was later imprisoned in Hitler's concentration camps. This version of the poem is found inscribed at the New England Holocaust Memorial in Boston, Massachusetts.

³⁴ Imâm Al-Hajj Talib Abdur-Rashid, "The Challenge of Modern Ministry in the Prophetic Tradition," keynote address to the Unitarian Universalist Association Continental Conference on Urban Ministries, March 2001.

³⁵ Charles Ess, "Prophetic, Wisdom, and Apocalyptic Traditions in Judaism and Christianity."

³⁶ Walter Brueggemann, *The Prophetic Imagination*, Augsburg Fortress Publishers, 1978.

³⁷ Adapted from the ELCA Church in Society.

³⁸ Martin Luther King, Jr., "Letter from a Birmingham Jail," April 16, 1963.

³⁹ For more on these statistics, see the website for the International Organization for Migration, <http://www.iom.int/jahia/Jahia/pid/254>.

⁴⁰ Stephen Castles and Mark J. Miller, *The Age Of Migration: International Population Movements In The Modern World* (London: The Guilford Press, 2003).

⁴¹ Daniel G. Groody and Gioacchino Campese, eds., *A Promised Land, A Perilous Journey: Theological Perspectives on Migration* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2008).

⁴² This article is drawn in part from a longer essay that will appear in *Theological Studies* in 2009.

⁴³ These themes are particularly brought out in *Economic Justice for All: Pastoral Letter on Catholic Social Teaching and the U.S. Economy*, Washington, D.C: National Conference of Catholic Bishops, 1986.

⁴⁴ Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, IV.1, "The Doctrine of Reconciliation," trans. G. W. Bromiley, ed. G.W. Bromiley and T.F. Torrance (London: T&T Clark International, 1956/2004), 157-210.

About the North Carolina Council of Churches

From efforts on behalf of farmworkers to encouraging the protection of God's earth to exposing racism within the criminal justice system, the North Carolina Council of Churches is at the forefront of progressive social issues that go to the heart of whom God would have us to be.

By drawing together members of sixteen Christian denominations in this work, the Council also serves our other key focus, Christian unity.

While the Council is itself overtly Christian, many of the committees and task groups are interfaith, including members from non-Christian faith communities. Several committees also include members of Christian denominations which are not part of the Council of Churches. Through this work, we live our motto:

Strength in Unity, Peace through Justice.

Our members include twenty-three judicatories of the following fifteen denominations, as well as eight individual congregations:

African Methodist Episcopal Church
African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church
Alliance of Baptists
Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)
Christian Methodist Episcopal Church
Episcopal Church
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
General Baptist State Convention
Metropolitan Community Churches
Moravian Church in America
Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)
Reformed Church in America
Religious Society of Friends
Roman Catholic Church
United Church of Christ
United Methodist Church

The North Carolina Council of Churches and Immigrant Rights

Since its inception almost 75 years ago, the Council has been actively pursuing a platform of peace and social justice across the state. One of the founding issues for the Council in 1935 was opposition to segregation and support for racial justice; the Council has long supported the rights of vulnerable and excluded people.

The Council worked for labor and housing protection for migrant farmworkers when many of them were African Americans traveling up and down the East Coast. Our commitment to farmworkers has continued even as their demographics have changed to a primarily immigrant Latino population. This commitment is now growing to include the broader issues of immigration policy - a position that remains consistent with our founding principles since current immigrants (especially those who are not documented) are a significant population of vulnerable and excluded people.

In 2002, the Council issued a public statement welcoming our Latino neighbors and calling on policymakers to increase Latinos' access to higher education, healthcare and housing, and to provide drivers' licenses for Latinos. In 2006, the Council passed a statement in support of comprehensive immigration reform, saying that "Religious communities must look to our scripture and faith traditions which call us to welcome the stranger, promote hospitality, and seek justice." In 2005 we supported a bill that would have allowed undocumented students to pay in-state tuition, and we were surprised at the degree of anti-immigrant rhetoric generated by this policy debate.

Since then, we have hosted a major conference on immigration and people of faith (attended by 300 people), started a newsletter called "Faith & Immigration," and organized the grassroots NC Religious Coalition for Justice for Immigrants. Over 1,300 North Carolinians, including over 350 clergy, have endorsed the Coalition's statement.

Take Action!

There are many concrete things that you can do to express solidarity with immigrants and to work for immigrant rights. Here are some ideas:

Education

- Preach a sermon on “Welcoming the Immigrant.”
- Include immigrants in pastoral prayers.
- Teach a Sunday-school class or small group on immigration.
- Host an event on immigration at your congregation.
- Offer a resource table at your congregation on immigration issues.

Service/Ministry

- Form a congregational partnership with a local Latino center, immigrant rights group, or other similar organization.
- Attend worship at a congregation with immigrants in your community.
- Host community meals at your congregation that include immigrants, creating a space where all are welcome to share.
- Visit a migrant farmworker camp in your county with members of your congregation.

Political/Public Action

- Contact national political leaders to express support for comprehensive immigration reform and opposition to enforcement-only measures.
- Meet with members of state and local governments to express support for measures including access to higher education, drivers’ licenses, and opposition to anti-immigrant legislation.
- Oppose the implementation of 287(g) and other local enforcement of federal immigration laws (see p. 28). Contact your county commissioners’ and sheriff’s offices to express your opposition to this program based on your faith and values.



Source: Chris Liu-Beers

The **NC Religious Coalition for Justice for Immigrants** is a growing statewide, interfaith movement committed to welcoming immigrants.

For more information and to sign a statement of support, visit:

www.welcometheimmigrant.org

At the website, you'll find:

- Tools for engaging congregations
- List of statement signers
- News articles
- Links to more information
- Interactive guestbook
- Theological reflections
- Denominational statements
- And much more



The North Carolina Council of Churches is a statewide ecumenical organization promoting Christian unity and working towards a more just society.

The Council enables denominations, congregations, and people of faith to individually and collectively impact our state on issues such as economic justice and development, human well-being, equality, compassion and peace, following the example and mission of Jesus Christ.

www.nccouncilofchurches.org

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