



Justice Rising

Grassroots Solutions to Corporate Domination

Supplying global capital with immigrant labor is now a multibillion dollar industry.

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Since NAFTA passed in 1994, 2 million small farmers in Mexico have been forced out of agriculture.

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Corporate mobility coupled with repressive immigration laws means lower wages, fewer benefits and less power in the employer-employee relationship.

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When they told us that the market would govern our lives we didn't know it could be so merciless.

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Emigrants—World Citizens or Corporate Slaves

by Jim Tarbell

The vulnerable and abused condition of undocumented, migrant labor is a symbol of the degraded and commodified position of the working class in the globalized economy. As long-time border analyst Tom Barry from the Center for International Policy states, "Until immigration advocates can . . . speak directly to the economic plight of US citizens and all workers, the prospects for immigration reform that supports a just legalization process are grim." The national media only quotes conservatives connecting corporate power to immigration policies, like Pat Buchanan whose solution is to "seal the borders of this country cold."

The truth is that corporations are omnipresent in the immigration debate. On one hand, they have formed EWIC, the Essential Workers Immigration Coalition to push a corporate agenda that sees migrants as working machines rather than people and uses them to lower wage rates for all workers.

Prominent national immigrant organizations have corporate members on their boards. The National Immigration Forum, which calls itself "the nation's premier immigrant rights organization," is chaired by John Gay of the National Restaurant Association. Joining him on the board are representatives from the US Chamber of Commerce and the American Nursery & Landscape Association. Meanwhile, the National Council of La Raza has had board connections with Wal-Mart, State Farm, McDonald's, Kraft Foods, and JC Penney.

Corporations play a dominant role in the advisory committees that lay out the philosophy and direction of both the Department of Homeland Security and its Immigrations and Customs Enforcement (ICE) and Protection units. The Homeland Security Advisory Council includes the CEO of Lockheed Martin, a Vice President of Dow Chemical and a Vice President of Boeing. The Co-chair of the Secure Borders and Open Doors Advisory Committee is the chairman of Sybase and is joined on the committee by the CEO of the US Chamber of Commerce, the President of the National Association of Manufacturers as well as representatives of Boeing, Disney and other corporate interests.

Meanwhile, Boeing and its corporate brethren are

reaping contracts with the Department of Homeland Security and private industry is lined up to earn profits from the construction of the border fence—except where it is not being built along the ranches of the wealthy and the country clubs of the rich.

As for the immigrants, until our laws recognize the Universal Declaration of Human Rights proclamation of 1948 that, "All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights," the only beneficiary of immigration policies is the corporate world. The sad part is the "merciless" violence this free market in human souls has brought upon people and communities.

This *Justice Rising* looks at the corporate role in this tragic situation and the grassroot solutions to solve this vexing problem. It exposes the benefits to global capital of a vulnerable migrant workforce without rights to organize and protect their own welfare. It reveals the role that neoliberal trade agreements have played in destroying economies in the global south, creating a diaspora of hungry and desperate people. It spotlights the solutions, which, due to the corporate influence on the national level, mainly come from grassroot groups. These solutions build alternative, self-reliant economies across the planet that eliminate the need for people to migrate abroad. Most importantly, they ensure that all workers have the rights of human beings and citizens. We all deserve these rights.



The Fire This Time

Debating Strategy in the Struggle for Immigrant Rights

by William I. Robinson

It is the communities of poor immigrant workers and their families who swell our cities and rural towns – to whom we must turn to reverse the anti-immigrant onslaught.

Draconian legislation introduced into the US Senate triggered mass protests by millions of US immigrants and supporters in Spring 2006. Known as the Sensenbrenner bill, for the name of the sponsoring senator, it would have criminalized both undocumented immigrants and their supporters. The bill underscored the extent to which elites in the United States, as elsewhere in global society, are willing to go to maintain a super-exploitable and super-controlled army of immigrant labor for the new global economy.

The uprising in protest over the Sensenbrenner bill, however, frightened the ruling class. A mass immigrant rights movement is at the cutting edge of the struggle against transnational corporate exploitation. Granting full citizenship rights to the tens of millions of immigrants in the United States would undermine the division of the US—and by extension, the global—working class into immigrants and citizens. That division is a central component of the new class relations of global capitalism, predicated on a casualized and “flexible” mass of workers who can be hired and fired at will, are de-unionized, and face precarious work conditions, job instability, a rollback of benefits, and downward pressures on wages.

The mass protests of Spring 2006 helped defeat the Sensenbrenner bill, but also sparked an escalation of state repression and racist nativism and fuelled the neo-fascist anti-immigrant movement. The backlash has involved, among other things, stepped-up raids on immigrant workplaces and communities, mass deportations, an increase in the number of federal immigration enforcement agents, the deputizing of local police forces as enforcement agents, the further militarization of the US-Mexico border, anti-immigrant hysteria in the mass media, and the introduction at local, state, and federal levels of a slew of discriminatory anti-immigrant legislative initiatives.

In the face of what can only be described as a terror campaign against immigrant communities, a split occurred. In simplified terms, the more “moderate” or liberal wing of the leadership pursued a strategy of seeking allies in the halls of power and limiting mass mobilization to just pressuring elites to open up space at the table for the Latino/a establishment, while the more radical, grassroots-oriented wing insisted on building a mass movement for immigrant rights and social justice from the ground up.



photo: deletetheborder.org

The liberal camp has sought allies in Congress, among the Democrats, organized labor, and mainstream civil rights and public advocacy organizations, to negotiate more favorable immigrant reform legislation. This camp has been willing to sacrifice the interests of some immigrants in order to win concessions from mainstream allies. Sacrifices include forsaking full legalization for all immigrants in exchange for dubious “paths to citizenship,” and to compromise over such issues as “guest workers programs,” which have been condemned as indentured servitude and have been shown to place the labor movement in a more vulnerable position.

The radical grassroots camp was not against lobbying or attempting to penetrate the halls of power, but insisted on prioritizing a permanent mass movement from below that subordinates alliances with liberals to the interests of the disenfranchised majority of immigrant workers and their families. This camp has also insisted on the need to link the immigrant rights movement more openly and closely with other popular, labor and resistance struggles around the world for global justice.

These distinct strategies represent, in the broader analysis, two different class projects within the multi-class community of immigrants and their supporters: the former, those middle class strata who aspire to remove racist and legal impediments to their own class condition; the latter, a mass immigrant working class that faces not just racism and legal discrimination but also, the acute labor exploitation and survival struggles imposed on them by a rapacious global capitalism.

The strategic challenge is how to achieve the hegemony of the mass worker base within the movement. The expanding crisis of global capitalism opens up grave dangers – for immigrants and for all of humanity – but also opens up opportunities. It is not to the Democratic Party or to the halls of establishment power, but to the mass base of this movement – the communities of poor immigrant workers and their families who swell our cities and rural towns – to whom we must turn to reverse the anti-immigrant onslaught.

Axis of Global Inequality

Native and Immigrant Workers

by William I. Robinson

The division of the global labor force into immigrants and citizens is a major new axis of inequality worldwide. Securing a politically and economically suitable supply of labor has been a major challenge for capital throughout its 500-year history. In earlier epochs this was accomplished through such institutions as the transatlantic slave trade and colonialism or the imposition of rigid caste systems. In this new epoch of globalization, transnational capital is becoming dependent upon increasing flows of immigrant workers who are denied the rights of citizenship.

The late 20th century began a period of massive new migrations worldwide. A low-end estimate by the United Nations placed the number of immigrant workers in 2005 at some 200 million, double the number from 25 years earlier. As countries and regions have integrated into global capitalism, hundreds of millions of people have been uprooted from the land, expelled from national economies and thrust onto an increasingly globalized labor market. In other words, the transnational circulation of capital induces the transnational circulation of labor.

Supplying global capital with immigrant labor is now a multibillion dollar industry. Globally-organized networks of "migration merchants," or usurious middlemen, provide a full range of legal and illegal services needed for migration, including the supply of passports, visas, work permits, cash advances, safe houses, above ground and clandestine transport, border crossing by coyotes, and employment opportunities in countries of destination, all for fees that can add up to tens of thousands of dollars and may place the transnational migrant in a situation of indentured servitude for many years. Once they arrive at their destinations, undocumented immigrants join the ranks of a super-exploitable labor force available for transnational corporations, local employers, and native



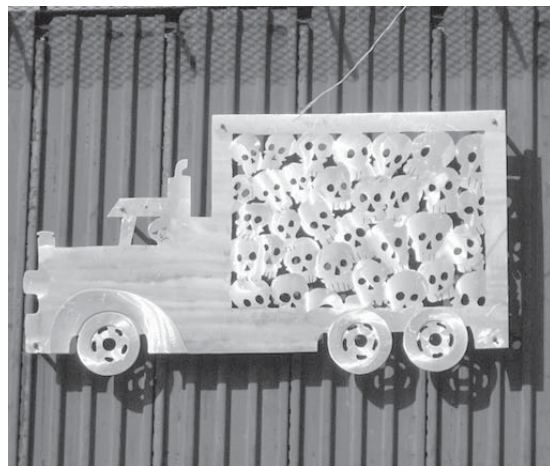
graphic: Kjersten Jeppesen

middle classes. Most people associate these new "untouchables" with the United States and Western Europe. But the use of immigrant labor goes beyond the North-South divide. Intense transnational corporate activity, wherever it takes place in the new global economy—from the factories along China's southern coastal belt, to the South African mines and farms, the Middle East oil meccas, and Costa Rica's service industry—becomes a magnet drawing in immigrant workers. And wherever these workers end up they face the same conditions: relegation to low-paid, low status jobs, the denial of labor rights, political disenfranchisement, state repression, racism, bigotry, and nativism.

The super-exploitation of an immigrant workforce would not be possible if that workforce had the same civil, political and labor rights as citizens, if it did not face the insecurities and vulnerabilities of being undocumented or "illegal." It is the status of being non-citizen/undocumented, and therefore deportable, that transnational capital and local elites must reproduce if they want to assure a controllable super-exploited labor force. It is crucial to see, therefore, that state controls over immigrant labor and the denial of civil, political, and other citizenship rights to immigrant workers are intended not to prevent but to control the transnational movement of labor and to lock that labor into a situation of permanent insecurity and vulnerability.

In sum, the maintenance and strengthening of state controls over transnational labor creates the conditions for "immigrant labor" as a distinct category of labor in relation to capital. The creation of this distinct category ("immigrant labor") becomes central to the global capitalist economy, replacing earlier direct colonial and racial caste controls over labor worldwide. The struggle of immigrant workers is therefore at the cutting edge of popular struggles worldwide against the depredations of global capitalism.

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One of several pieces of art used in this issue that appear on the US/Mexico border fence in Nogales Mexico
photos: Jim Tarbell

Transnational capital is becoming dependent upon increasing flows of immigrant workers who are denied the rights of citizenship.



Corporate Ag Policies

Devastate Peasant Economies

by Christopher Huh

It is up to US citizens to make a difference by contacting their senators and representatives, and insist they vote "no" on three pending free trade agreements.

Immigration promises to be a major issue of debate in this election year. Across the nation, many voices in favor of restrictive immigration are calling for building a 300-mile border fence, or criminalizing the estimated 12 million undocumented immigrants living in the US.

Rationale for restricting immigration ranges from claims that immigrants receive more in terms of social assistance and bilingual services than they pay in taxes, that they lower wages, and that they compete with Americans for jobs.

Many favoring its restriction portray immigration as an isolated issue, perhaps because immigration is something they "see" as immigrants arrive in communities, schools and workplaces.

What is not so easy to "see" are the root causes of immigration and the ways in which trade agreements and US agricultural policy relate to the immigration issue.

Americans are probably most familiar with trade policies through recent impacts felt in the US, such as the loss of jobs as manufacturing operations move overseas, or the decline of rural areas as small farms and businesses disappear and young people leave.

One impact of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) has been the flow of cheap agricultural produce, including corn, into Mexico. US agriculture is heavily subsidized by taxpayers, with most subsidies going to giant farms and agribusinesses. These farms receive inputs like pesticides and fertilizers at subsidized prices, and so crops are produced at low cost, or even overproduced for surplus.

Subsidies also lower prices at which produce is exported. NAFTA's terms reduced export barriers and, as a result, US-grown corn is "dumped" across the border. The Oakland Institute notes that since NAFTA passed in 1994, 2 million small farmers in Mexico, most who have grown corn for generations, but cannot compete with this American corn, have been forced out of agriculture.

Another impact of NAFTA is the relocation of large US-based businesses and retailers into towns and cities in Mexico. Thousands of smaller businesses cannot compete with these transnational corporations, resulting in displacement of workers on a huge scale. As people lose their means to make a living, they migrate to cities or US-owned *maquiladora* factory sites near the border.

Millions try to enter the US. According to the non-governmental organization Witness for Peace,



Veteran social-justice advocate David Solnit encouraging people to take the power to decide.

photo: Jim Tarbell

the rate of immigration from Mexico has doubled since 1994, and about two-thirds of the undocumented Mexican population in the US arrived after NAFTA came into effect.

Because NAFTA and other trade agreements are designed to benefit mega-corporations, small businesses, farmers and workers are suffering.

If those calling for restricted immigration want us to believe that their motives are not steeped in xenophobia or racism—they might shift their focus toward reshaping US agricultural policy and positions on trade agreements, rather than preventing undocumented immigrants from obtaining driver's licenses, or denying college education to immigrants' children.

Trade has the potential to create prosperity between participating countries. It is the imbalances in current trade agreement models that have led to massive economic upheavals in our country and others. Even so, in December 2007, the Peru Free Trade Agreement was approved by the Senate.

And also in December 2007, the current version of the Farm Bill was approved without proposed amendments that would have limited subsidies on US crops.

How can one make a difference? People in Mexico and other countries cannot vote in US elections. It is therefore up to US citizens to make a difference by contacting their senators and representatives, and insist they vote "no" on three pending free trade agreements — with Colombia, Panama and South Korea — that could come up for vote within the next few months.

And in 2008, we could elect as president the candidate who best understands relationships among immigration, US trade policies, and poverty. Rather than talking fearfully about barricading our country with a border fence, that leader might instead boldly steer the US in a new direction by strengthening our local economies, demanding trade justice, and engaging the world on a fairer playing field.

Christopher Huh lives in Maine, where, for over five years, he has worked to help low-income farmworkers achieve economic self sufficiency through employment and training.



Two Chickens In the Corporate Pot

by Laura Carlsen

Pedro Martin works on a chicken farm outside the village of Pegueros, Jalisco. According to a Washington Post story, for many years Pedro and his co-workers had little reason to even consider making the dangerous trek across the border to the US in search of work. They made a decent living at the chicken farm, and the locally-produced chickens found a steady market in the region. Jalisco ranks among Mexico's top chicken-producing states, providing the nation with 11% of all chicken meat produced.

But since all protective tariff barriers to US imports were removed on January first of this year, Pedro's not sure he'll have a job anymore. Chicken was originally slated for zero tariffs and import controls for the year 2003. However, faced with an influx of US chicken exports, the industry convinced the Mexican government that "imports cause a threat of serious damage to the national industry." The government asked for a safeguard to restore tariff protection, and it was granted to 2008.

The negotiation wasn't that hard. US producers didn't oppose the measure since the export of leg quarters to Mexico is merely supplementary income for them. US producers generally make up costs plus profit just through the sale of the coveted breast meat on the US market. The Mexican industry alleged that US poultry producers were "dumping" (exporting below costs) the leg quarters on their market.

Lorenzo Martin, president of the neighboring Tepatitlan Poultry Farmers Association and the head of a large, well-established poultry farm in the area warns, "If the US starts selling things extra cheap outside the US, then it won't just be small farmers and individuals who will be leaving. It will be people like me."

Some of Mexico's chicken farmers displaced from their own communities could end up working in substandard conditions in poultry processing plants in the US.

NAFTA promised win-win economic integration throughout the continent. These two chicken stories do add up to a win-win—but only for the likes of the world's largest poultry producer, Tyson Foods.

Tyson wins when it takes over the Mexican market share and drives Pedro's company out of business. It wins again when it hires the unemployed Pedro as an undocumented worker in a US plant. Meanwhile, for its workers—migrants and native, documented and undocumented—corporate mobility coupled with repressive immigration laws means lower wages, fewer benefits and less power in the employer-employee relationship both abroad and at home.

If we add in US government corn and soybean

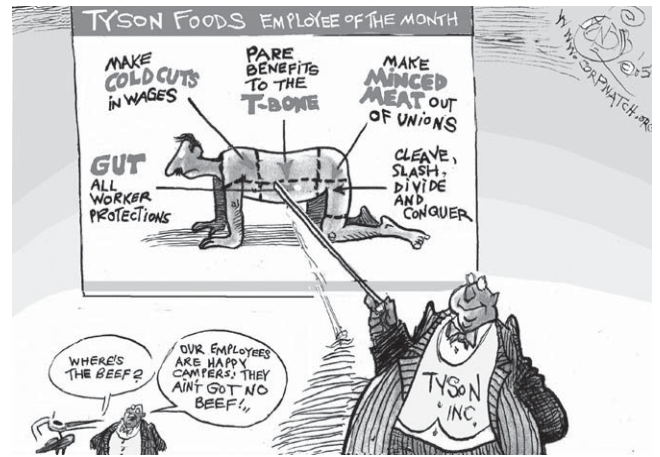
subsidies that have delivered an estimated \$1.25 billion a year in feed-stock savings to Tyson and its three closest competitors, things could hardly be better for the food giant.

This is the single most important thing to understand about NAFTA—who are the winners and the losers. Tyson's win-win scenario is a lose-lose for Pedro and thousands like him. The international system is rigged to strengthen the hand of mega-corporations and weaken small farmers, workers, women producers and migrants.

The good news is that we can create a new win-win scenario. We can reform immigration policies to integrate workers legally into the system and provide full labor rights so they are not, by their very existence, unfair competition to US-born workers. We can guarantee the right to organize, the only route open to evening up the imbalances and inequality of the system.

We can also heed the call of small farmers in Mexico and even US presidential candidates and renegotiate NAFTA to create and maintain decent jobs in both Mexico and the United States.

Laura Carlsen is the Director of the Americas Program for the Center for International Policy. She has researched and written about US/Mexico relations for over twenty years and now lives in Mexico City.



graphic: CorpWatch.org

We can reform immigration policies to integrate workers legally into the system and provide full labor rights.

Two Tyson Attacks

Tyson has been sued twice now for operating an illegal immigrant smuggling operation that included recruiting in Mexico, providing false documents and employing undocumented workers. A class action suit charged that these practices enabled the company to drive down wages by 10-30%.

In a 2005 Human Rights Watch report, a Tyson worker at one of its Arkansas plants stated in Spanish, "They have us under threat [*bajo amenaza*] all the time. They know most of us are undocumented—probably two-thirds. All they care about is getting bodies into the plant. My supervisor said they say they'll call the INS if we make trouble." Although ample evidence was presented on both hiring and recruiting practices, the politically powerful Arkansas-based transnational beat the rap.

Tyson also controls, along with Pilgrim Pride and the Mexican company Bachoco, 52% of chicken production in Mexico today, thanks in large part to favorable foreign investment rules under NAFTA. These factory farms typically lead to layoffs and increased pollution in Mexico. The rapid concentration of poultry production in Mexico has been called a threat to the right of people to define their own food and livestock systems for future generations.

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JUSTICE RISING is a publication of **The Alliance for Democracy**, whose mission is to end the domination of our politics, our economics, the environment, and our culture by large corporations. The Alliance seeks to establish true economic and political democracy and to create a just society with a sustainable, equitable economy.

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Co-Chairs of the AfD National Council
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photo: Jim Tarbell

Migration Blues

by Jim Tarbell

In Ecuador, on the west side of the Andes, just south of the Río Guayllabamba, the eighth graders in the town of

Los Bancos made a homage to the reality that migration has had in their lives. The mural covers the wall surrounding the school. The portion shown above says "The Migration: You can not buy happiness, not even with all the money of the world." Like many villages, the families of Los Bancos have been torn apart by migration. This mural is the anguished cry of the children left behind.

Thirty-five years ago, I served as a Peace Corps Volunteer there, when Los Bancos was a thriving frontier town. It stood at the center of a land reform project created by a new road carved into the inaccessible jungle. People were excited to start a new life, in a new land, where they could raise their own family in their own homes, much as the American pioneers did.

Now life has changed. All of Ecuador has been devastated by globalization. Oil in the Amazon promised prosperity for all, but only delivered toxins along the route of the pipeline that now passes through Los Bancos. At the turn of the millennium, mired in international debt, the Ecuadorian financial system went bankrupt. The political elites abandoned the national currency and took on the US Dollar as their national currency. The savings of middle-class Ecuadorians vanished in the transaction. Breadwinners had no choice but to migrate to North America or Spain, leaving the cries of the children scrawled on the school walls. Repatriated income from workers overseas is now the second largest income source in the country.

The north side of the Guayllabamba River, however, is a different story. There, in the magical communities of Mondriacas and the Intag, people have formed coops for selling their coffee and lufas around the world in the burgeoning fair-trade market. When multinational corporations threatened to put copper mines on their land, they burned them down—twice. Their hand-written sign (shown to the left) says "FRONTLINE OF THE FIGHT FOR LIFE: All of the communities working together with the state of Imbabura and the county of Cotacachi, DECOIN, Intag, businesses of the great valley and other organizations. We are proving with words and actions that we are united to defend the rights of our communities to a dignified, ecological and peaceful life."

No one wants to leave their family and communities to find a job in another country—not the parents or the children. Building alternative, local economies that work for people, their communities and the planet and is the only viable solution to the pains of migration.

Next JR

The next issue of *Justice Rising* will look at energy, who owns it, who controls it, the Corporations or the People? Sub-missions are welcome. Articles should be 600 words. The deadline will be June 15, 2008. Send submissions to jr@thealliancefordemocracy.org

AfD Says No to Corporate SPP Coup d'État

The Alliance for Democracy now has multiple teachable items to download about the Security and Prosperity Partnership (SPP). On April 21-22, the 4th SPP Summit took place in New Orleans—where the failure of the corporatocracy—government of, for and by the corporate elite—could not be more on display. We will post reports of this "People's Summit" on the website. The SPP, a handshake deal in 2005 between Bush, Fox of Mexico and Martin of Canada, is more than a trade agreement. Not debated or approved by Congress, it created a parallel bureaucracy of tri-national security and prosperity working groups whose members include military, government officials, and corporate executives.

The AfD has signed a "Letter to Congress" to halt the SPP until there is debate. The Alliance also has many new materials for education and action on the website at www.thealliancefordemocracy.org/SPP. Included are: an action alert "There Is No Time to Lose"; a color poster "We must join Canada and Mexico in mobilizing resistance!!!"; four fact sheets on 1) The Corporate Vision, 2) Super Corridors Linking Mexico, the US and Canada, 3) Corporate Control, Trade and Transport of Water and 4) West Coast Corridor; and two articles by Ruth Caplan and Nancy Price in recent issues of the Progressive Populist. There are PowerPoint presentations and published news articles. These all can be used to grow this tri-national movement against this corporate agenda to move money and commodities anywhere they like in North America, trampling on the rights of communities to control their resources and destinies.

AfD, The Border and *Maquiladoras*

After the AfD Convention in Tucson last Fall, Terrie Brady and 9 other AfD members journeyed with BorderLinks to the Mexican town of Nogales for an inspection tour of life in the immigration zone. This is her story.

by Terrie Brady

The serene hillsides of Nogales belie the fact that cancer rates increased since *maquilas* arrived in the '40s. Begun as an attempt to slow immigration into the US, *maquilas* are primarily assembly plants of medical items, plumbing fixtures or garments for multinational corporations.

They pollute and injure people with lead and solvents. Workers without protective gear are exposed to airborne glass and metal. Workers often fall seriously ill after six years of this work. Mothers who work while they are pregnant, often have children who have breathing difficulties and neurological problems. Some *maquilas* have been closed due to these unsafe working conditions, only to move their operations to China.

In 1996 the US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) ordered Price Pfister, operating in Paoima, CA, to use sand instead of lead in casting water faucets, as US laws require. The company, with its 400 jobs, chose to move its lead-polluting industry across the border. Now they can continue to use lead to the detriment of their workers and consumers, and pay lower wages, without any danger of penalty.

Maquila workers earn about \$80 a week. This is for long 8-9 hour days, often piece rate. Overtime leads to an extra dollar a day.

Workers in *maquilas* are unorganized by the unions, and only human rights groups work to provide the workers with information about their rights. The national union called The Confederación de Trabajadores Mexicanos, (Confederation of Mexican Workers—CTM) does not protect the *maquila* work-

ers. A CTM organizer said he can not organize them due to the trade agreements. We questioned that statement when we were later told that the CTM receives \$1 per worker from the *maquilas*.

Paulita from Nogales advises *maquila* workers about their rights and responsibilities. She works for La Coalición por Justicia en las *Maquiladoras* (The Coalition for Justice in the *Maquilas*). They advise and publish pamphlets to further their educational efforts.

She worked in a *maquila* from age 14. She was exposed to lead and solvents while she was pregnant. She said that this often causes babies to be born with brain injuries and pulmonary problems. She said her own child had some trouble breathing and speaking. Workers have medical coverage, but this insurance does not include children of the workers.

We met a man named Mario who had recently been deported. After working for years in the US, he returned to his home in Puebla to see his parents who are in their seventies and eighties and his children who were ages two and five. While returning to his job, he was caught in Tucson and was sent back Mexico. He signed a form pledging not to return to the US. He did not have the money to get back to Puebla, so he got a job in a *maquila* in Nogales earning \$80 a week. He needed \$50 a week to eat and send money to his family. This left only \$20 for all other expenses including trying to save up for a bus ticket back to Puebla.

Young José, from Sonora, had been trying to reach his father in Texas. In Sonora he had worked full-time as a farm worker earning \$70 a week for working 12-hour days, 6-days a week. This money was needed by his mother to support their family. This boy's dream was to be able to pay to go to middle school. He was caught crossing the border. "Who will pick the food but us?" he asked. "We only want to earn a little more money."



AfD members, hosts and guides in Nogales

photo: Ralph Schmoldt



Terrie Brady makes a point to a CTM Union Representative

photo: Jim Tarbell



No Mas Muertos soup kitchen for deportees at the border

photo: Jim Tarbell



Paulita, C J M advocate

photo: Jim Tarbell

Market Driven



Half-a-hundred Juárez police officers protest what they consider the arbitrary arrests of fellow officers by the army and the alleged framing of those officers on charges of drug possession.

photo © Julián Cardona

by Julián Cardona

translated by Russell Bartley

Crime statistics for 2008 in Ciudad Juárez are as appalling as they are unprecedented: 48 killings in January; an additional 45 murders in February and March set a new record of homicides. Officially, 210 people met violent deaths at the beginning of 2008. In addition, 45 bodies not included in the homicide statistics were exhumed by federal police from secret burial sites, while 20 people picked up in this period are still missing. Most of these 275 cases are unlikely to be solved, even though the number of active duty military personnel in Juárez has risen from 539 to 2,565.

Although the opening episode of this criminal stage was the January 17 arrest in El Paso, Texas of the ex-operations chief of the city police on charges of smuggling marijuana, it was a series of events over a 36-hour period three days later that defined the new reality. At midnight January 20, a Juárez police captain was shot 22 times and killed. At 7:32 in the morning, a 10-year-old girl was murdered and presumably raped by gang members who came to

burglarize her house while her mother was away and her stepfather was working at a *maquiladora*. That afternoon, a six-month-old baby was incinerated to death. The following morning, the operations chief of the Juárez police was slain on his way to work. At about the same time a man murdered his pregnant daughter-in-law and her unborn child with an axe. That night, on a main downtown avenue, four men in three vehicles blocked the armored pickup truck of the regional coordinator of the State Investigations Agency and opened fire with AK-47 assault rifles and .50 caliber armor-piercing weapons.

On a Monument to the Police, a few days later, in an unparalleled daylight act, executioners placed a placard containing the names of slain officers and a list of 17 additional officers condemned to die. A dozen policemen and a soldier have been executed already this year.

Presumably, the officers who were murdered or received death threats belong to La Línea, a criminal organization with a horizontal hierarchy closely tied to the traffickers that includes street cops, senior municipal and state police officers, ex-cops, a transnational federation of gangs known as Los Aztecas, and high-ranking military officers. Alliances of this sort shelter and engender every imaginable activity of the country's constantly expanding criminal economy: kidnappings, human contraband, bank robberies, etc.

The business model of the 1990s that operated through Mexican drug cartels no longer exists. The emergence of an increasingly robust domestic drug market inside Mexico is the major difference. Drug routes that used to export narcotics have branched out and now make drugs available in every corner of the country. Rather than a war over turf, this appears to be a battle for street corners.

In a globalized world, the fluttering of a butterfly in China can produce a gale on the other side of the planet. As American drug consumers have opted for local marijuana and methamphetamines, the consumer market has expanded in Mexico. How else to explain the killing of a humble flower vendor or a street hawker? What could such killings possibly have to do with a supposed war among drug barons over routes or turf? Only a State demanding submission would seem to benefit from the spread of terror at this level.

Police registers show that thirty-six street-level drug dealers have been executed in 2008. A majority of them operated in poor neighborhoods of cardboard and pallet shacks or in the rundown central district where a murdered man was found with signs of torture. In a single night, three more victims were tossed into empty lots; others have been found half-naked with plastic bags over their heads.

Nor have faith and charity escaped the influence



This past March, in Juárez, federal police disinterred nine bodies in the concrete block building (far right). An additional 36 bodies were recovered from another site in the La Cuesta suburb.

photo © Julián Cardona

Merciless Violence

of the drug trade. The general manager of Emmanuel Ministries, a Juárez shelter for wayward children, and his operations manager were arrested in El Paso on March 19 while attempting to smuggle weapons and ammunition into Mexico. They were transporting 24 guns, including a .50 caliber armor-piercing machine gun with tripod, .308 and .223 caliber AK-47 and AR-15 assault rifles, a number of 9mm, .22, .40 and .45 caliber pistols, and a shotgun.

This reflects only one aspect of the criminal scene in this, the most important center of the country's *maquiladora* industry. There are no reliable statistics on the number of people here who live off the drug trade and related activities, but it can be inferred that the globalized economy of crime represents an alternative to the low salaries of the *maquiladora* and rivals that industry in economic importance. Recently, army and federal police operations in Juárez have uncovered "narco *maquilas*" with production lines that package thousands of doses for distribution to bars, cantinas and discotheques; to salons or VIP houses or after-hours dance halls; and to street-corner flower and cigarette vendors.

The business logic of the criminal economy is no different from that of the formal economy. The narco *maquilas* were set up by La Línea in response to consumer demand and to put an end to deaths from adulterated or unauthorized drugs.

The oversight and administration of so extensive a market requires a huge criminal bureaucracy beyond the means of individual drug barons or cartels. La Línea presumably links municipal and state officials, ex-police officers and gang members to the traffickers. That this organization, with its managers and district supervisors, is the target of the present wave of violence is nothing more than a logical response to the market and a reflection of the times.

The Mexican State has always been the hidden guarantor of the drug trade and other illicit activities. It is the state that grants and denies concessions. The degree of government control has varied, depending on the political variables. It would be naïve to suppose that the power vacuum created by these deaths will not be filled. The demand of Mexican consumers must be regularly satisfied.

In this symphony of executions, there have only been two silent pauses: first, the release of two captive traffic cops and their superior officer following a visit by the Secretary of Defense; and second, during the visit to this city by members of the National Public Security cabinet to announce "Joint Operation Chihuahua," the country's fourth militarization deployment. By contrast, there were multiple murders in the days immediately before this visit.

In this context of violence, Chihuahua's governor brazenly announced just days before Joint Operation



Inside the San Lorenzo bakery in Juárez, where traffic lieutenant Carlos Adrián de Anda sought refuge after being set free the night of March 5. He had been beaten and his uniform torn.

photo © Julián Cardona

Chihuahua was launched that killings would drop off "in the coming days and weeks." It was prophetic. The levels of crime in April pale next to those of red March.

Drugs seem to be the perfect product for a globalized and politically somnolent world. When they told us that the market would govern our lives we didn't know it could be so merciless. Where the attacks that have cost so many lives in Juárez come from is largely irrelevant. It may have been one faction of La Línea annihilating another, or perhaps an alliance of these guys against someone else; or, most recently, the army seeking to reimpose full federal control over the corrupt and lucrative extortion racket and the concessions opportunistically snapped up by municipal and state police during the explosion of the internal market. The drug market in Mexico has a life of its own, and a great thirst for blood that must be satiated.

Julián Cardona is an award-winning photojournalist living in Ciudad Juárez where he covers life on the border of globalization.

Russell Bartley is a bi-lingual journalist and Professor Emeritus from the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee.



Three pushers, who worked in East Juárez, were tortured, murdered and thrown into empty lots. That same night another man met an identical fate in a different part of the city.

photo © Julián Cardona

Groups—Concerned with Emigrants—



CIW is a Florida, community-based worker organization.

Members are largely Latino,

Haitian, and Mayan Indian immigrants working in low-wage jobs. They combined a community-wide work stoppage, general strikes, hunger strikes, and a 230-mile march from Ft. Myers to Orlando in 2000 to end twenty years of declining wages in the tomato industry. They serve as a great model for community organizing around immigrant labor issues. CIW's anti-slavery campaign fights criminal slavery by uncovering, investigating, and assisting in the federal prosecution of slavery rings preying on hundreds of farmworkers. You can also join their Fair Food Fight demanding that Burger King ensure fair wages and worker rights from their tomato suppliers.

The National Network for Immigrant and Refugee Rights (NNIRR) is a national organization composed of local coalitions and immigrant, refugee, community, religious, civil rights and labor organizations and activists. They work to promote a just immigration and refugee policy in the United States, and to defend and expand the rights of all immigrants and refugees, regardless of immigration status. They have led weeks of action against destructive trade agreements. They also have been active in the World Social Forum including leading the migration track at the Border Social Forum in Ciudad Juárez in 2006 and organizing an Immigrant Rights Caucus at the first US Social Forum in Atlanta in 2007. They are one of the few national groups with no corporate connections on their Board .



Coalición de Derechos Humanos

Coalición de Derechos Humanos ("The Human Rights Coalition") is a grassroots organization which promotes respect for human/civil rights and fights the militariza-

tion of the US Southern Border region, discrimination, and human rights abuses by federal, state, and local law enforcement officials affecting US and non-US citizens alike. As part of their campaign, they are critical of the corporatization of the border including contracts to Boeing for high-tech surveillance equipment and security contracts with private military companies by the Department of Homeland Security. Their Coalition to Bring down the Wall brings together diverse community members and organizations that wish to unite the human rights, environmental, and Indigenous advocates and communities on this vital issue.

The Mexico Solidarity Network struggles for democracy, economic justice and human rights on both sides of the US-Mexico border. It is a grassroots organization dedicated to profound social change that challenges existing power relationships and builds alternatives. They are dedicated to building a strong economic base in all communities so that the push and pull of immigration forces does not destroy communities in Mexico.



CJM is an international coalition composed of religious, labor, environmental, community and women's organizations in Mexico, the United States, Canada and Dominican Republic. They strive for a better quality of life, sustainable development, social justice, human rights, and environmental stability. Their actions are carried out wherever transnational corporations violate workers' rights and adversely affect their communities by destroying their cultures and polluting the environment. They publish booklets to train *maquila* workers about their rights and offer resources on immigration including an action on ending slave labor in the strawberry fields of Louisiana and a report on the push and pull of NAFTA .

The Americas Program, now under the auspices of the Center for International Policy, is the successor of the



A M E R I C A S P R O G R A M

a new world of citizen action, analysis, and policy options

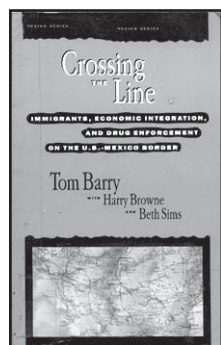
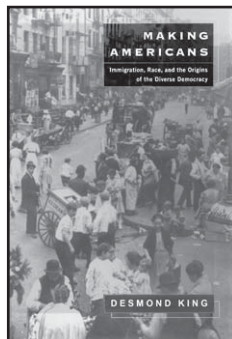
International Relations Center that functioned for years as the premier analysts of border policy and corporate influence out of Arizona. The same scholars continue working on the program from Washington DC and Mexico City. Their papers on immigration are well thought out and expansive on the corporate connection.

World Citizens or Corporate Slaves—BOOKS

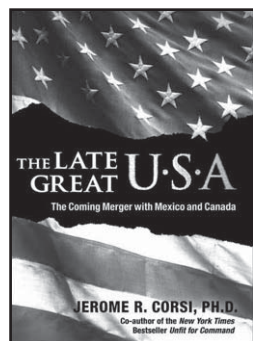
by Chris Calder

US immigration debates often tell far more about Americans—both truths and falsehoods—than about immigrants. Perhaps because of this, the most clear-eyed, comprehensive book on this list comes from Britain.

Desmond King, Professor of Politics and Fellow at St. John's College, University of Oxford, focuses on the 1920s as the birth of modern American immigration policy in *Making Americans*. King finds during that decade's debates the formation of an explicitly racist, even eugenics-based, policy that consciously constructed America as a racial hierarchy, Anglo-Saxons up top. King argues convincingly that beneath today's veneers of patriotic nativism on the right and liberal internationalism on the left, a broad and largely unconscious consensus exists to maintain America as the home of the free and, first and foremost, of the white. King's treatment of Americanization, the process by which we define ourselves individually and as a nation, is an unsettling and essential focus.



Crossing the Line, by Tom Barry, et al, is the closest thing to an on-the-ground report on the issues arising from the US-Mexico border. Its often surprising discussion of the unique borderlands world demonstrates how far reality outstrips the bromides of mainstream immigration debate. In a string of border-hugging twin cities, and in the vast desert reaches beyond, the peoples of the region are evolving a version of tomorrow that will leave today's commentators in the dust. *Crossing the Line* is compassionate reportage well-reflected upon, a rarity.

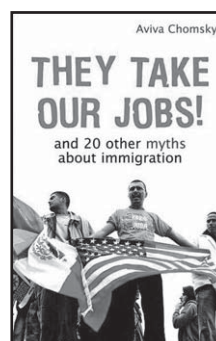


The rest of the books on this list do a better or worse job of marshalling facts to their cause, but too often veer into reactionary realms of both left and right. The most interesting of these is Jerome R. Corsi's *Late Great USA*. Corsi argues that high-level government plans are afoot

to create a European Union-style confederation out of Canada, Mexico and the US, complete with a single currency (the Amero) and greatly relaxed borders. (See pg. 6 box on the SPP.) Those who dismiss this sort of thing as wingnut conspiracy or assume that relaxation of borders is automatically a good thing may be doing themselves a disservice. Corsi is thorough in his reporting on a number of very large and current projects that seem to point to a privatized future where national borders may fade but economic borders, again, privately maintained and enforced, assume great importance.

Aviva Chomsky's, *They Take Our Jobs: and 20 Other Myths About*

Immigration is the best of a group of books that address immigration on an issue-by-issue basis. These books by and large favor a relaxed immigration policy. Chomsky is most successful at tearing down assumptions about a charity-based US immigration policy or some golden age when immigrants behaved exactly as native-born Americans wanted them to. Like King, she identifies the 1920s as the formative time for modern immigration policy, and points out the blatantly political slant of that policy since World War II. She is less successful in actually answering some of the most potent immigration-born anxieties. Chomsky, like Michele Wucker in *Lockout*, displays an almost Rumsfeldian disregard for the effect of a greatly relaxed US-Mexico border on wage and living standards. She claims the US labor movement can be relied upon to maintain those standards. Any actual worker in today's de-unionized economy knows this is pure fantasy.



The shallow and ossified politics of the US these days makes it very difficult to grapple with an issue at once as global and personal as immigration. But, as with climate change, an issue with which immigration is fast becoming one, the challenge is unavoidable.

Chris Calder is a freelance writer and former small town newspaper editor in Northern California.

Alternative Economies Build Strong Communities

by Rachel Mehl

Neoliberal economic policies have given unfettered access of US and Canadian-based corporations to Mexican natural resources, land, and labor. Under NAFTA, the market prices of corn and other staple crops have dropped below production cost due to the “dumping” of heavily subsidized US agro-industrial products on the Mexican market. In Mexico, this process has destroyed the livelihoods and displaced over one million campesinos from their lands, forcing them to migrate north to the US for jobs as refugees of the global economy.

In the current global economic order, we must recognize two fundamental human rights to frame our grassroots and global resistance. One is the basic human right to freedom of movement, i.e. migration. The other is the right to remain: the collective right of communities to live free of economic violence, military occupation, and environmental destruction. Violations of this collective right of communities in the global south by the corporate economy—and the military regimes that maintain it—directly cause migration to the US.

Mexico is a prime example of these processes and of grassroots resistance and alternatives. When the Zapatistas publicly rose up on January 1, 1994 (the day NAFTA took effect), they listed 13 demands: land, work, education, housing, health, food, peace, communication, culture, independence, democracy, justice, and freedom. Since the uprising, and as a continuation of 500 years of indigenous resistance to genocide, the Zapatista movement has developed community practices to make these demands a reality for and by themselves. Health and education collectives and cooperatives of corn, coffee, honey, and traditional Mayan crafts provide tangible grassroots alternatives to corporate economic control and displacement.

These projects also provide opportunities for multi-directional solidarity among Zapatista communities and other communities in resistance around the world. The Zapatista women’s weaving cooperatives are one example. Zapatista women use weaving cooperatives as part of their organized resistance. Working collectively, women weavers develop autonomous social spaces and economic alternatives. They decide collectively on craft prices and practice democratic, transparent, and horizontal power structures. The cooperatives go beyond the concept of “Fair Trade.” While Fair Trade projects often rely on capitalist markets to find a niche for producers from the global south to make a



photo: PrensadeFrente

fair(er) wage, one may use the term Alternative Economy to describe a more radical alternative to capitalism which links producers organizing in resistance to corporate domination to consumers who also organize and resist. This important link dismantles commodity fetishism, in which consumers buy faceless commodities divorced from the truth of their production and underlying political and economic processes. Instead, the cooperatives’ crafts explicitly visibilize the face of resistance and tell the stories of Zapatista construction of autonomy and alternatives to capitalism.

The Alternative Economy Program of the Mexico Solidarity Network links three Zapatista women’s weaving cooperatives—Mujeres por la Dignidad, Xulum Chon, and Nichim Rosas—to a network of grassroots organizers and communities in the US. Current interns organize in New York City; El Paso; Albuquerque; Washington DC; Stonington, Maine; Berkeley; Grand Rapids; Rutland, MA; Chicago; Houston, and other cities. The program links local struggles in both countries through a solidarity network which recognizes that grassroots struggles against corporate domination are interlinked. We have much to learn from one another and many resources to share. Through the Alternative Economy program, interns in the US promote the distribution of Zapatista cooperative crafts as part of educational processes that break down commodity fetishism and create alternatives to capitalism. Interns share lessons of the Zapatista rebellion, foment discussion, and spark communities to action and solidarity, thus linking the Zapatista struggle to their own resistance. For more information on how you or your group can participate in this network of solidarity between communities in the US and in Chiapas, as well as information on the university-accredited study abroad program “Mexican Social Movements,” and other opportunities to get involved with the Mexico Solidarity Network, contact msn@mexicosolidarity.org or visit www.mexicosolidarity.org.

Rachel Mehl is the former coordinator of the Alternative Economy Program at the Mexico Solidarity Network.

Interns in the US promote the distribution of Zapatista cooperative crafts as part of educational processes that break down commodity fetishism and create alternatives to capitalism.





Law & Economics of US Immigration

Once national boundaries were established—a fairly recent development in human history—we can speak of immigration, of people born outside a nation coming into it to live.

Most of the earliest immigrants into the former American Indian tribal lands that have become the United States of America were slaves: indentured slaves from Great Britain; and chattel slaves from Africa. Most indentured white slaves died before they were due to be freed at the end of their term of indenture. Chattel slaves were more valuable since they represented assets and bred more assets. This system was very profitable for the few families that ran it. It was driven in turn by land speculation, America's main industry.

When the US Constitution was written, largely by men who benefited from the slave trade and land speculation, in Article III, Section 8, Congress was given the power "To establish a uniform Rule of Naturalization." However, in Section 9, in order to make sure Congress did not stop the importation of slaves for some time, it says "The Migration or Importation of such Persons as any of the States now existing shall think proper to admit, shall not be prohibited by Congress prior to the year one thousand eight hundred and eight."

With a few exceptions, immigration into the United States was without restrictions until 1923. Naturalization, actually becoming an American citizen, was much more difficult. The Naturalization Act of 1790 allowed naturalization only of people of European descent and excluded those who were indentured servants. The importation of African chattel slaves was made illegal as of January 1, 1808, but slaves were brought in illegally at least as late as 1859. Chinese persons were excluded from immigrating in 1882. Anarchists were excluded by law in 1901.

Finally, in 1921 the Emergency Quota Act was passed, followed by the Immigration Act of 1924. This began the practice of assigning quotas by nationality, with a preference for people originating in Western Europe. This continued until the



Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965 added preference for foreign citizens who have US relatives and to skilled workers over the unskilled. For the first time Mexican immigration was given a quota.

Illegal immigration is now believed to contribute more to the increasing population of the United States than legal immigration. Because any person born in the United States is a citizen of the United States, families of illegal immigrants become legal in a single generation.

Without immigration, legal and illegal, the population of the US would not have expanded significantly since 1970 due to a relatively low fertility rate among people born in the US. This means a great deal of economic activity—in particular the building of housing, roads, schools and commercial structures—would not have taken place. Immigration drives economic expansion. But, it also drives ecological destruction.

Ethnic and racial bias may create temporary tensions, but they have nothing to do with the economic fundamentals. Those who benefit directly from immigration, in particular those who are helped to keep their labor costs cheap, favor both expanded legal immigration and minimal enforcement of laws against illegal immigrants. Those who feel their own livelihoods are threatened, usually because they have to compete with immigrants for jobs or government services, favor minimal legal immigration and maximal enforcement of laws against illegal immigration.

The big picture is not a balance between these two competing claims. Real estate cannot become more valuable if there are less people in the United States. Real estate interests tend to be very active in politics, so legal and illegal immigration are likely to continue at high levels with no regard to any negative environmental or social consequences.

William P. Meyers is the author of The Santa Clara Blues: Corporate Personhood Versus Democracy. He serves on the board of the California Center for Community Democracy.





graphic: Matt Wuerker

Corporate Coyotes

Legal “guest worker” visas are snatched up by corporate coyotes who charge and exploit the immigrants under cover of the law.

Five hundred welders and pipefitters from India and United Arab Emirates are suing US corporation Signal International, an oil-rig repair and construction company. The workers were brought to Mississippi and Texas, on guest-worker visas, to repair damage from hurricanes Rita and Katrina. The workers’ suit claims the company promised to help them obtain permanent resident status. Many of these foreign workers gave up life savings, paying up to \$20,000 in fees based on this belief. The workers also claim they were housed in unhygienic, crowded “bunkhouses” that made them ill. Of course, the corporation denies the charges claiming the workers were treated fairly, legally and were paid “in excess” of prevailing rates.

This is not the only complaint involving foreign workers brought here under false pretenses and subsequently exploited by their employers. Hispanic hotel workers, farm laborers and construction workers – many cleaning up after Katrina – cite low pay and harsh working conditions. According to the Southern Poverty Law Center, immigrants brought in under the guest worker program are “systematically exploited and abused,” all over the country.

The US government has turned up the heat on small-time smugglers, called “coyotes,” who put safety aside and charge exorbitant rates to workers trying to get into the country illegally. And to the workers they say “wait your turn to come in legally.” But these legal “guest-worker” visas are snatched up by corporate coyotes who charge and exploit the immigrants under cover of the law.

And are there really not enough US pipefitters and welders willing to take jobs that pay “in excess” of their normal rates? These are good blue-collar jobs that could support a middle class family. Maybe we could train some workers whose jobs were lost to free trade.

And are there really no US computer programmers who would like to work for Microsoft? Bill

“Coyote” Gates says there are not, at least not enough good ones, and he went before Congress to complain. He and the other corporate managers want to bring in more “guest workers” on the H-1B visas. Gates says most of the highly educated graduates from US schools are foreign citizens. And US corporations like Microsoft, Google and Sun get fewer of these visas every year because more and more go to foreign corporations who bring in their own foreign workforce. Currently, 65,000 H-1B visas are issued plus another 20,000 to foreign students who graduate with advanced degrees from US universities. Gates would like to double the number of visas. Lamar Smith (R-Texas), would triple it, raising the visa cap to 195,000 in 2008 and 2009.

Why are more than 60% of the places in US university graduate programs in science and math filled by foreign students? Could it be we don’t spend enough to educate US high school and undergrad students in these subjects?

US Senator Grassley (R-Iowa) responded to Gates in a letter. “Reforms are needed so that US businesses – both large and small -- can find, recruit and hire the workers they need.” Grassley goes on to say, “I’m concerned that some companies are more concerned about their bottom line than about the dire need to better educate and train American students and workers. The solution is not, in my opinion, importing more foreign workers. Rather, we must strengthen educational opportunities for America’s students and workers, as you noted. Such an investment will help reduce the trend in which 60% of students in US STEM [science, technology, engineering, and mathematics] doctoral programs are foreign born.”

Jan Edwards is the creator of the “Tapestry of the Commons” which is online at www.thealliancefordemocracy.org. She is a member of the Redwood Coast Chapter of the AfD.



Deportee

by Woody Guthrie, 1947

The crops are all in and the peaches are rott'n'g,
The oranges piled in their creosote dumps;
They're flying 'em back to the Mexican border
To pay all their money to wade back again

Goodbye to my Juan, goodbye, Rosalita,
Adiós mis amigos, Jesús y Maria;
You won't have your names when you ride the big airplane,
All they will call you will be "deportees"

My father's own father, he waded that river,
They took all the money he made in his life;
My brothers and sisters come working the fruit trees,
And they rode the truck till they took down and died.

Goodbye to my Juan, goodbye, Rosalita,
Adiós mis amigos, Jesús y Maria;
You won't have your names when you ride the big airplane,
All they will call you will be "deportees"

Some of us are illegal, and some are not wanted,
Our work contract's out and we have to move on;
Six hundred miles to that Mexican border,
They chase us like outlaws, like rustlers, like thieves.

Goodbye to my Juan, goodbye, Rosalita,
Adiós mis amigos, Jesús y Maria;
You won't have your names when you ride the big airplane,
All they will call you will be "deportees"

We died in your hills, we died in your deserts,
We died in your valleys and died on your plains.
We died 'neath your trees and we died in your bushes,
Both sides of the river, we died just the same.



photo: LatinAmericanStudies.org

Goodbye to my Juan, goodbye, Rosalita,
Adiós mis amigos, Jesús y Maria;
You won't have your names when you ride the big airplane,
All they will call you will be "deportees"

The sky plane caught fire over Los Gatos Canyon,
A fireball of lightning, and shook all our hills,
Who are all these friends, all scattered like dry leaves?
The radio says, "They are just deportees"

Goodbye to my Juan, goodbye, Rosalita,
Adiós mis amigos, Jesús y Maria;
You won't have your names when you ride the big airplane,
All they will call you will be "deportees"

Is this the best way we can grow our big orchards?
Is this the best way we can grow our good fruit?
To fall like dry leaves to rot on my topsoil
And be called by no name except "deportees"?

Goodbye to my Juan, goodbye, Rosalita,
Adiós mis amigos, Jesús y Maria;
You won't have your names when you ride the big airplane,
All they will call you will be "deportees"



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Why You Should Care

Migrants Deaths are Mounting

As US policies tighten up along the border, migrants fleeing the devastated, globalized economies in their home towns are taking more treacherous paths across hot, dry stretches of the Sonoran Desert. Reported annual deaths doubled between 1995 and 2005. The perils of Central Americans even reaching the US/Mexican border are also escalating.

US Policies Destroy Communities

Neoliberal US trade policies that promote the free movement of global capital have destroyed communities and economies in the global south forcing people to make the dangerous and harrowing journey to wealthy neighboring states.

Abuse of Migrant Laborers Allows Lowering of All Wages

The disenfranchisement of undocumented, immigrant workers destroys their ability to negotiate fair wage rates. Employers then utilize this labor supply factor to hold wage rates down across the board, increasing the income disparity between the workers and their employers.

Immigrant Workers are Modern Slaves

From H-1B Visas to undocumented workers, the lack of rights for emigrants has put them in the position of being slave labor or indentured servants. Charges have been brought against Louisiana strawberry growers, Florida fruit producers and others that are treating their workers as virtual slaves.



What You Can Do

Work to stop the extension of neoliberal trade agreements. Encourage your representatives to vote No on trade agreements with Colombia, Panama and South Korea. Insist that presidential candidates deal with US trade policies during their campaign and when they become president. Push for the US to practice foreign aid that builds self-reliant, strong, local economies around the world.

Help build strong alternative economies throughout the world.

Support NGOs developing self-reliant economies that create sustainable life-styles for people across the planet. Buy fair-trade products that give an equitable return to workers throughout the world. Withhold support from multinational corporations that are dependent on an abused and manipulable labor force to maximize bottom line profits.

Ensure that US immigration policies are fair and equitable. Educate yourself about the various factors involved with immigration policy and contact your representatives to make sure that they support policies that are reasonable and humane for all peoples and not based on political attitudes, racial bias or economic motives.

Promote universal rights for all workers. In order to ensure that migrant workers are not abused and enslaved, push for recognition of universal human rights and the rights proclaimed by the International Labor Organization in 1949 that workers have a right to organize unions. Every worker is entitled to citizenship and a full slate of rights in whatever country they are living so they will not be susceptible to manipulation by employers.