



# UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST ASSOCIATION OF CONGREGATIONS

## Advocacy and Witness Programs

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Our Unitarian Universalist faith calls us to recognize that no one is "the stranger,"

to affirm and promote the inherent worth and dignity of every person,

and to support the use of justice for all people.

# Welcoming Our Neighbors: *A Unitarian Universalist Guide to Immigrant Justice*

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**This resource was prepared by staff at the:**

- **Washington Office for Advocacy;** and
- **Office for Congregational Advocacy and Witness.**

**The Washington Office for Advocacy** is located in Washington, D.C. Its mission is to influence public policy decisions made by the U.S. Congress and Administration on issues of concern to the Unitarian Universalist Association. The Washington Office also provides support and resources to congregations and individuals seeking to create change in their communities and states.

**The Office for Congregational Advocacy and Witness** is located in Boston, Massachusetts. Its mission is to support and enhance the social justice efforts and programs of Unitarian Universalist congregations and to help increase the collective UU and interfaith voice in the public policy arena. The Office for Congregational Advocacy and Witness promotes UU and interfaith social justice campaigns and actions and provides a variety of resources to social action committee members and ministers.

**For more information, see:**

- [uua.org/immigration](http://uua.org/immigration)

*May, 2010.*

*This is an up-dated and expanded version of a resource released in honor of Immigrant Rights Day on May 1, 2008, originally titled, “Welcoming the Stranger.”*

**Find Welcoming Our Neighbors online at <http://tinyurl.com/qtu3q6>**

# Why Do We Need Immigration Reform?

**“Nearly two-thirds [of Latinos] say the failure of Congress to enact an immigration reform bill has made life more difficult for all Latinos.”**

*Pew Hispanic Center*

**“The number of border deaths has increased dramatically in recent years, now reaching nearly one death per day.”** *National Council of La Raza*

**“The failure of our immigration laws to provide a realistic means for farmers to hire seasonal workers has forced employers to “opt-out” of the legal system and opt-in to an underground labor market. Estimates suggest that up to 75% of the agricultural workforce may be undocumented. This fact is evidence of a stark lose-lose situation: employers are forced to hire unlawfully and operate on the margins or lose their crops, and workers are forced to work without documentation and live in the shadows or lose their livelihood.”** *American Immigration Lawyers Assoc., AILA InfoNet Doc. No. 08050268 (posted May. 2, 2008).*

**In the current immigration system, families are separated and workers are hurt by:**

- Visa backlogs
- Flawed guest worker programs
- Harmful enforcement-only measures

**“Every year the economy as a whole creates some 500,000 more unskilled jobs than Americans want to do, yet we issue only 5,000 year-round visas for the immigrants who might fill them.”**

*The Washington Post, 12-15-06.*

**“Our current system has made illegality the norm.”** *Making the Case for Comprehensive Immigration Reform, American Immigration Lawyers Association (AILA).*

**“Current immigration laws do not meet the needs of our economy or workers. In the current regime, there is no visa category authorizing essential workers in low- or semiskilled occupations to work in the U.S., except on a seasonal basis. That seasonal, employment-based visa—the H-2B program—is wholly inadequate to meet labor needs in a broad range of industries, from landscaping to hospitality to health care.”**

*Making the Case for Comprehensive Immigration Reform, (AILA).*

**“Despite soaring demand . . . an annual limit of 140,000 on employment-based green cards has not been altered since 1990. A study published in August by the Kauffman Foundation of Kansas City, Mo., found that 1.1 million highly skilled immigrants and their family members were languishing in backlogs in 2006, waiting for green cards.”** *The New York Times, 9-9-07.*

**“. . . hundreds of heavily armed ICE agents stormed six meat packing plants across America’s heartland . . .”** *Michael Graves, House Hearing on Raids, 2-08.*

**“There are approximately five million U.S. children with at least one undocumented parent. The recent intensification of immigration enforcement activities by the federal government has increasingly put these children at risk of family separation, economic hardship, and psychological trauma.”** *Paying the Price: The Impact of Immigration Raids on America’s Children, National Council of La Raza and Urban Institute, 2007.*

**“The Washington Post recently calculated that ‘with roughly 1.6 million immigrants in some stage of immigration proceedings, the government holds more detainees a night than Clarion Hotels have guests, operates nearly as many vehicles as Greyhound has buses and flies more people each day than do many small U.S. airlines.’”**

*Detention Watch Network*

# Visa Backlogs

## Coming Here Legally: Obtaining Lawful Residence

*The majority of immigrants who obtain a “green card”—a visa which grants lawful permanent residency—do so through **sponsorship by a family member or sponsorship by an employer who is already in the United States**. After five years as a lawful permanent resident, an immigrant can apply for U.S. citizenship. But a tremendous backlog in processing visa applications is putting families in the painful position of having to choose whether to follow the law and be separated for up to twenty years in some cases, or to break the law in order to be together.*

There are many different categories of visas for people who want to become permanent residents of the U.S. Which type of visa a person applies for is determined by their relationship to the family member already in the U.S. who is sponsoring him or her, or the type of work they are coming to the U.S. to perform.

Many visa categories have a quota or “cap,” which limits the number of people who can receive that kind of visa to enter the U.S. each year. Family reunification is the largest avenue through which individuals qualify for permanent residence. Family-based immigration is split into two major categories.

- **Immediate relatives** - This category is unlimited, and includes spouses of citizens, unmarried children under 21 of citizens, or parents of U.S. citizens who are over 21.
- **Family preference** - This category includes unmarried children over 21 of U.S. citizens (cap: 23,400); unmarried children over 21 of green card holders who are not yet citizens (114,200); married children of U.S. citizens (23,400); and siblings (65,000).

It might seem as if there are a lot of visas in the family preference category, but . . .

**Due to application processing backlogs, the wait for a permanent residency visa for those who fall into the “Family Preference” category ranges from two or three years to *over twenty*, depending on an applicant’s sub-sub-category and country of origin.**

See the flowchart on the next page to find out how long the waiting period for a visa can be for different people trying to immigrate to the United States. Turn to the following page to read how one family’s wait for the visa backlog to clear has lasted over a decade.



# A Family's Wait for U.S. Visas Spans Generations

By Jennifer Ludden, for National Public Radio. May 10, 2006.

Full version online at [www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=5397034](http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=5397034)



. . . The [United States immigration] system is so overwhelmed that families end up being divided for years while they wait for visas to become available . . . . The Lobo family knows how long the wait can last. This Filipino family has endured two generations of separation to come to America.

Ramon Lobo's family moved to the United States in 1994. His father, Maximo Lobo, had worked for a U.S. air base in the Philippines, which made the family eligible for a visa to move to the United States.

But Ramon Lobo couldn't join the rest of his family. Just as the Lobos' visas came through, Ramon, the eldest child, turned 21. That put him in a different category, with a much longer wait for a visa. After agonizing, Ramon Lobo's parents and two younger siblings moved to California, leaving Ramon behind in the family house.

Ramon Lobo and his parents thought it would be two or three years until his visa

came through. But the wait stretched to nine years.

And the separation was all the more difficult because U.S. law does not allow relatives abroad to even visit family in the United States once they've petitioned to live permanently in the United States. They are presumed to be at high risk for overstaying their visa. Even when Lobo's mother became ill with cancer, he was denied permission to visit her.

Lobo's permanent visa finally came through in 2003. He now lives with his family in Sacramento, in a tidy neighborhood of beige stucco ramblers, and works at the Department of Motor Vehicles.

*“Ramon Lobo and his parents thought it would be two or three years until his visa came through. But the wait stretched to nine years.”*

But Lobo also left his own family behind. By the time his visa came through, he and his longtime girlfriend, Ana, had had a 2-year-old boy, Patrick.

He married Ana after his visa came through, but left her and his son behind to move to the United States.

Lobo has applied for his wife to join him in America. But for now, the couple communicates through a Web cam connection over the Internet. Also joining the conversation is Patrick, now 5, and Tristan, Ramon and Ana's 17-month-old son, who was conceived on one of his father's visits home to the Philippines.

When Lobo first came to California, he brought Patrick with him. As a dependent, Patrick got traveling papers right away. But Lobo soon decided it was better for the child to be with his mother than in daycare while he worked. So a few months later, he took Patrick back to the Philippines . . . . [Lobo] says he'll never be able to forget the end of that trip, when he left his son at the airport.

"The look on his face was the hard [part] to see," Lobo says. "You know the look on the kid, he's expecting that he's coming with me. Then, he started crying when I gave him to my wife."

Lobo says he could barely make himself get on the plane. But he just kept thinking: There is no future for us in the Philippines.

While Ramon has battled loneliness in America, Ana has had to navigate some cultural pitfalls. When she became pregnant the first time, the two could not marry -- that would have forced Ramon to start his visa process all over. But the Philippines is deeply Catholic. So, they faked a wedding. They bought rings. Ramon faked a wedding photo on his computer. Even their closest relatives didn't know.

"I don't [tell] them the truth," Sanchez Lobo recalls. "I keep on lying, we're married, we're civilly married." But Sanchez Lobo was a nurse at the time, and that was a problem. Nurses in the Philippines sign an oath to be role

models. The hospital kept asking to see her marriage certificate. She quit her job. Now, she lives on the money Ramon sends from California.

Ana, Ramon and their children have lived this separated family life for two-and-a-half years. And according to the visa bulletin the U.S. government sends out each month, the wait could be another four years.

Ramon Lobo thinks the United States should be more flexible with families. He wonders why loved ones can't wait together in America while visas are being processed. He points out the economics. Just think of the millions of dollars he and others send to their families overseas, instead of spending it in the United States. More importantly, he worries about the social cost.

"A family is the foundation for any country," Lobo says. "If you have bad families, you won't produce good citizens."

Ramon Lobo's parents had hoped to welcome the rest of their family to the United States. But recently, his mother died of her cancer.

Now, Ramon and Ana are planning out his next visit to the Philippines. He'll stay three or four weeks.

"Any longer would make it harder to leave," Lobo says. "This way, they won't really get used to my being there. It'll be just like a dream."

*"A family is the foundation for any country," Lobo says. "If you have bad families, you won't produce good citizens."*

# Flawed Guest Worker Programs

*In addition to visas granted to immigrants coming to the U.S. to live permanently, visas are also granted to individuals coming to the U.S. to fill the temporary needs of U.S. employers. **Temporary or nonimmigrant** work visas are divided into categories dealing with everything from foreign athletes to academics to laborers. For the purposes of worker justice and immigration reform advocacy, two of the most important categories are H-2A and H-2B, which deal with unskilled labor. These temporary visas are valid for one year, and are renewable for two more years.*

- **H-2A** – temporary or seasonal agricultural workers.
- **H-2B** – temporary or seasonal nonagricultural workers, e.g., at a ski resort, carnival, etc.

## Problems with the System

**Shortage of Unskilled Labor.** The H-2B category is fraught with bureaucratic red tape that makes it time-consuming and difficult to use. The H-2B category is further limited by an annual cap of 66,000 visas, far below current demand. Furthermore, the H-2B temporary visa program is useful only for employers who can establish that their need for foreign workers is seasonal. A nonimmigrant visa category does not exist for employers who need workers for permanent or long-term jobs, for example in health care, retail, hospitality, construction, and other industries. **Permanent** immigrant visas for unskilled laborers are available, but that category's low cap of 5,000 per year has created a backlog. According to U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services, "A petitioner could expect to wait many years before being granted a visa under this category." According to AILA, the wait for a permanent visa for unskilled work is typically over ten years long. *As a result, it is extremely difficult for enough unskilled workers to legally enter the United States, causing employers and workers to seek ways to circumvent the system.*

**Opportunities for Employer Abuse.** The H-2B program is rife with exploitation and abuse. As with all guestworkers, H-2B workers suffer from an imbalance of power with their employers because their temporary, non-immigrant status ties them to particular employers and makes their ability to obtain a visa dependent on the willingness of the employer to make a request to the U.S. government. H-2B workers and U.S. workers at H-2B employers lack many of the protections afforded to workers in the H-2A program, such as . . . free housing . . . and eligibility for federally funded legal services. Many H-2B workers begin their employment indebted to recruiters, contractors, or employers who charge high fees to gain access to the jobs. Many workers finance the fee payments by taking out high interest loans or putting the deeds to their homes in the hands of a labor recruiter as collateral. Once in the US, many workers face unrealistic productivity requirements and unsafe working conditions, underpayment for their difficult and dangerous work, insufficient work, and unsuitable living conditions. *Despite these conditions, these debt-ridden workers are reluctant to complain because their employers or contractors exercise control over them and they fear losing their job or not being rehired the following season.<sup>1</sup> To escape exploitation, some H2-B workers leave the employers who sponsored their visa and become undocumented workers.*

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<sup>1</sup> Farmworker Justice. "The H-2B Guestworker Program."

# Trafficking H-2B Guest Workers in the Gulf Coast

*In 2006, 550 guest workers from India were brought to the U.S. under false pretenses. In the spring of 2008, several dozen of the workers marched to D.C. to call for an investigation of their maltreatment. The story of their trafficking and the experiences of two of the workers, Sabu Lal and Vijay Kumar, follow.*

*For updates on the Signal International Indian guest workers' situation, visit [www.nowcrj.org](http://www.nowcrj.org)*



## Brought Under False Pretenses

In the wake of Hurricanes Katrina and Rita in 2006, a company called Signal International hired a labor recruiting firm called "Global Resources" to find workers in India for their Texas and Mississippi shipyards. Global Resources promised 550 Indian workers that they would receive permanent jobs with Signal International, green cards, and eventually the right to bring their families to America, in exchange for \$20,000.

For many of the men who accepted the offer, \$20,000 represented their entire life savings. Some men borrowed money, and others sold their homes for a chance at U.S. citizenship. But when the workers arrived in the United States, they found that they had been lied to.

Instead of receiving a path to citizenship, the workers from India were given H2B guest worker visas-- permission to work in the U.S. for ten months, with the possibility of renewal controlled by their employer, Signal International.

The workers were forced to live on company property, paying \$1,050 a month to share a room with 23 other men. Signal tried to make about 30 welders who had been promised wages of \$18.50 per hour sign papers to cut their salaries to \$13.50/hr.

When some of the workers tried to organize for better wages and living conditions in the spring of 2007, armed guards raided the workers' bunk-rooms at 3:00 AM and detained six of the organizers with the intention of deporting them.

## **Sabu Lal's Story**

Sabu Lal says Signal security guards burst into the trailers at 3:00 am . . . . Lal and [co-worker Joseph] Jacob believe they were targeted because they spoke better English than most of their peers and because they had spoken out at a church meeting. Jacob says a Signal manager escorted him into the camp's TV room and told him and other workers they weren't allowed to leave, not even to use the bathroom.

. . . . Lal, 39, describes the horror of realizing that he was about to be deported. He'd sold everything and couldn't bear the thought of returning empty-handed to his wife and two young children. He says he left a good job to come to America and felt he'd rather die than be shipped back. Lal attempted to kill himself by slitting one of his wrists with an industrial cutting tool. He was later taken to a nearby hospital and treated for his wound.

The workers were finally released into the care of community groups after pressure from [Saket] Soni and other activists. Lal and Jacob remain in a tenuous legal status today. The two men are not allowed to work in the US on their current visas, and say they can't return home for fear of the loan sharks who financed their passage and the disappointment of their family.

Calling . . . from an undisclosed location, in legal limbo, Lal deeply regrets the pain the news of his suicide attempt brought to his family. "My daughter told me, 'Daddy, just come home, we don't care,'" he said.

*-- Human trafficking of Indian guest workers alleged in Mississippi shipyard; Contractor defends 290-man camp, by Lindsay Beyerstein and Larisa Alexandrovna. The Raw Story. April 13, 2007.*

## **Vijay Kumar's Story**

Vijay Kumar was working as a contract welder in the sweltering United Arab Emirates two years ago, far from his wife and family in southern India, when he spotted an advertisement offering welders and pipe fitters "permanent lifetime settlement in the USA for self and family."

Kumar answered the ad to find that workers were being recruited to rebuild oil rigs in Mississippi and Texas destroyed by Hurricane Katrina. He returned to India, signed a contract and paid a recruiter \$20,000 to travel to the United States. He told his wife, who had just given birth to a son, that he would send for them as soon as he could.

"I sell my house, my wife sell her jewels, we borrow money from friends. We dream of living in America together," Kumar, 34, said yesterday. He stood outside the U.S. Justice Department during a protest with several dozen other Indian workers, all of whom have been staging a hunger strike in Washington for weeks.

When about 500 Indian recruits reached Mississippi in the fall of 2006, Kumar and the others said, they found that they had been deceived. Their new employer, Signal International Corp., had hired them as temporary "guest" workers with 10-month H2B visas. There was no possibility of obtaining permanent residency for themselves, let alone their families back home. Signal denies that it knew the workers had been promised U.S. residency.

*--Indian Workers Decry Recruitment Tactics, by Pamela Constable. The Washington Post, June 12, 2008.*

# Harmful Enforcement-Only Measures

*Global economic forces and the United States' broken immigration system have caused undocumented immigration to swell. The federal government's failure to reform the system has caused the Department of Homeland Security and many states and towns to adopt an enforcement-only approach, implementing increased enforcement without providing complementary positive solutions to fix the broken system. But under new federal leadership, the situation seems to be changing.*

## Raids

“U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), the interior enforcement arm of the Department of Homeland Security (DHS)... has markedly increased the pace of worksite raids in the past few years... ***the number of un-documented immigrants arrested at workplaces increased more than sevenfold from 500 to 3,600 between 2002 and 2006.***”<sup>2</sup>

\*Update: In February 2009, 28 workers in Bellingham, WA, were detained in the only raid of Obama's administration (as of 6/23/09). Secretary of Homeland Security Janet Napolitano later said she had been unaware that the raid was going to occur, ordered an investigation into why the raid took place, and released the 28 workers with legal permission to work for the duration of the investigation. Napolitano's words and actions indicate a shift towards targeting exploitation by employers rather than undocumented workers.

## Detentions

“***The U.S. government detains over 280,000 people a year—more than triple the number of people in detention just nine years ago—in a hodgepodge of over 400 facilities at an annual cost of more than \$1.2 billion.***”<sup>3</sup>

\*Update: In May 2009, President Obama presented a budget that eliminated the State Criminal Alien Assistance Program, which previously spent \$400 million to subsidize state and local governments for the cost of jailing undocumented immigrants.

<sup>2</sup> *Paying the Price: The Impact of Immigration Raids on America's Children*, National Council of La Raza & Urban Institute. Oct. 31, 2007

<sup>3</sup> *About the U.S. Detention and Deportation System*. Detention Watch Network. [www.detentionwatchnetwork.org/aboutdetention](http://www.detentionwatchnetwork.org/aboutdetention)

## **Is enforcement bad? Don't nations have the right to enforce their borders?**

A nation has the right to create and enforce immigration laws, but to respond only by increasing enforcement when the system is broken can have consequences that are inhumane and harmful on an unforeseen scale.

In spite of the billions spent on fences, raids, patrols, and prisons, undocumented immigrants have increased since 1992 from 4 million to about 12 million. Undocumented immigrants account for 3 – 5% of the U.S. population and are part of our nation's economic and social fabric. One way to have avoided an influx of undocumented immigrants would have been to have offered more opportunities for legal immigration to unskilled and semi-skilled workers, reduced visa backlogs, and offered better protections and opportunities for guest workers. In short, the problem is not enforcement itself—rather, problems occur when *only* enforcement is applied, without complementary common-sense solutions to mend our broken system.

*“No administration can be faulted for seeking to enforce the law, but the nation is saddled with a law that cannot work. The economy, as long as it continues to grow, will continue to attract immigrants, and they will come illegally if there is no other way. The administration acknowledges that an enforcement-only approach cannot possibly address the most significant immigration problems facing the country and is likely to exacerbate the problems already experienced by businesses and workers alike.”—Enforcement Only: All That's Left of Immigration Reform, The Washington Post, 08/12/07*

**Denial of Due Process and Habeas Corpus** In 1996, Congress passed laws denying due process to immigrant detainees: An immigrant who has committed certain crimes—including minor offenses like check fraud or shoplifting—is subject to mandatory detention. Even if they have already served time or paid penalties for these convictions, immigrant detainees are ineligible to be released on bond and may be deported without a hearing or the opportunity to offer mitigating factors.

**Due process** “means that individuals are presumed innocent until proven guilty; have the right to a hearing before a judge; that there is right to counsel and to examine adverse evidence; that there is a right to appeal; and that there is right to seek release on bond. It means judges should be allowed to use discretion in considering whether someone is banished from this country.”

*Donna Lipinski, AILA*

**Inadequate Healthcare in Detention** In May of 2008, Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) released a report stating that sixty-six people had died in detention over the past three years. According to the ACLU, “Deficient medical care has led to numerous avoidable deaths, and has caused unnecessary suffering for thousands of people in immigration detention. Immigrant detainees routinely experience long delays before treatment, are frequently denied necessary medication for chronic illnesses, and are often refused essential referrals prescribed by medical staff.”<sup>4</sup>

**Criminalization of Immigration Detainees** Immigration detainees are kept in prisons or prison-like facilities, even when a detainee has committed no crime. Detention Watch Network (DWN) reports, “About half of all immigrants held in detention have no criminal record at all. The rest may have committed some crime in their past, but they have already paid their debt to society. They are being detained for immigration purposes only. Although DHS owns and operates its own detention centers, it also ‘buys’ bed space from over 312 county and city prisons nationwide to hold the majority of those who are detained (over 57%). Immigrants detained in these local jails are mixed in with the local prison population who is serving time for crimes.” According to the ACLU, “Detainees, including children, are often subjected to arbitrary punishment, including strip-searching; shackling; solitary confinement; neglect of basic medical and hygienic needs; denial of outdoor recreation; lack of access to phones, mail and legal resources; and verbal, physical and even sexual abuse. Survivors of torture, asylum-seekers, families with small children and individuals with serious mental health and medical conditions such as HIV/AIDS, are routinely locked up in jails or under jail-like conditions.”

**Financial Cost** DWN has calculated that the average cost of detaining an immigrant is \$95 per day. Alternatives to detention, which generally include a combination of reporting and electronic monitoring, are effective and cheaper, with some programs costing as little as \$12 per day. These alternatives to detention still yield an estimated 93% appearance rate before the immigration courts.



**Psychological Effects on Children of Detainees and Deportees** Family of detainees and deportees must not only compensate for a loss of income, but also deal with the profound emotional effects of involuntary separation. For information about the psychological consequences of splitting families, see *Paying the Price: The Impact of Immigration Raids on America’s Children*, a publication of National Council of La Raza and Urban Institute. Online at <http://tinyurl.com/qmujmy>

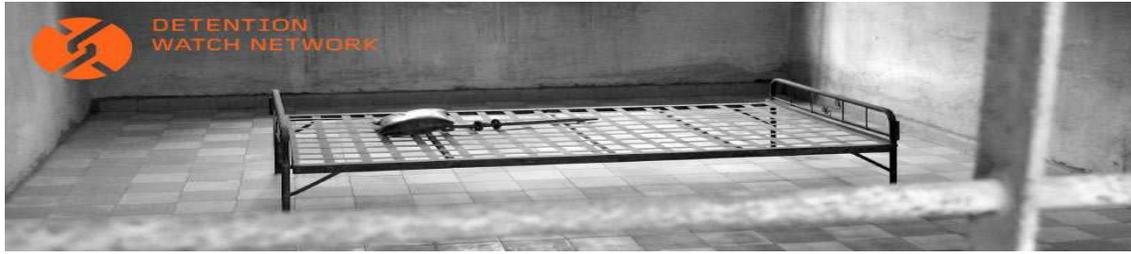
**Deportations** “The number of illegal immigrants [sic] deported by the federal government is on the rise. [ICE] deported 280,000 people during the most recent fiscal year ending Sept. 30. That is a 44 percent jump from the previous fiscal years.”<sup>5</sup>

<sup>4</sup> ACLU Calls on Congress to Improve and Codify Immigration Standards. ACLU. [www.aclu.org/immigrants/detention/30437res20070710.html](http://www.aclu.org/immigrants/detention/30437res20070710.html)

<sup>5</sup> Immigration & Customs Enforcement Reports 44 Percent Increase in Deportation, by Mike Sunnucks. *Phoenix Business Journal*, 03/17/08.

# Mahmod's Story – A Family Torn Apart

*From the Detention Watch Network website, June 2, 2008*



**Introduction** - Mahmod is a Palestinian national who lawfully entered the United States in 1996. For the past six years he has been married to Ree—a U.S. citizen who works for a branch of the Department of Homeland Security—and has been stepfather to her five children. Mahmod was denied lawful permanent residency solely because he supported the Palestine Liberation Organization while a college student in Jordan twenty years ago. Though his support was limited to collecting donations and distributing leaflets, and he has had no involvement with the PLO since that time, Mahmod was deemed “inadmissible” to the U.S. for having “engaged in a terrorist activity” and ordered removed to Jordan.

**Experience of Detention** - Mahmod was imprisoned at the Rolling Plains Detention Center in Texas for twenty months while he sought federal court review of the decision. He posed no danger or flight risk and had repeatedly offered to submit to electronic monitoring or even house arrest so that he could be with and support his family while he litigated his case. The government refused to consider his release, never provided him with a bond hearing, and did not even conduct the in-person custody review required by their own regulations. Meanwhile, Mahmod's wife and stepchildren suffered enormously, both emotionally and financially, because of his absence. His wife was forced to declare bankruptcy, and his older stepchildren were forced to put aside their studies in order to help support the family.

**Conditions in Detention** - While Mahmod was in detention he was treated worse than American prisoners doing sentences for criminal activity. As an American prisoner he would have been guaranteed rights and been supplied with the internet, library, cable TV, decent food, and medical care. However in immigration detention none of these are provided. The food was horrible with very small portions. Many of the detainees suffered from stomach problems. The nurse at the center had never been to nursing school and the doctor who visited weekly was a veterinarian from town. Before being taken into custody, Mahmod was told by a dentist that he needed at least 2 root canals and crowns, yet the detention center doctor gave the diagnoses of "beautiful teeth" when he complained of pain in the teeth.

**Conclusion** - Mahmod served 2 more years in detention, but was eventually released with electronic monitoring to his family. After 2 months at home, he was asked by ICE to report to an office to repair his ankle bracelet but instead was taken into custody. Mahmod had lost his appeal to the 5th Circuit and faced a protracted legal fight with a slim chance of success or removal to Jordan. Tired of fighting the government, he and Ree chose to allow for his deportation. Mahmod now lives in the United Arab Emirates with family. His wife Ree misses him greatly but has been able to visit him. At the same time, she has 5 children in the United States, two of whom are older, and she knows that if she decides to move to the Middle East she will miss many important events in their lives.

For more stories from detainees, see: [www.detentionwatchnetwork.org/stories](http://www.detentionwatchnetwork.org/stories)

# What Is Comprehensive Immigration Reform?

*Comprehensive Immigration Reform (CIR) advocates<sup>6</sup> often conceive of CIR as having several distinct components: **The creation of legal avenues** for workers and families to enter the U.S.; **a path to legalization** for undocumented immigrants who are here; **reduction of backlogs** in family and employment-based immigration; and **effective border security and immigration enforcement** which respects due process.*

## **The Creation of Legal Avenues to enter the U.S.**

Current immigration laws do not meet the needs of our economy or workers. Currently, there is no visa category authorizing essential workers in low- or semiskilled nonagricultural occupations to work in the U.S. except on a seasonal basis. That seasonal visa, the H-2B program, is inadequate to meet labor needs. A “break-the-mold” program would provide visas, full labor rights, job portability, and a path to permanent residence over time for those who would not displace U.S. workers. Such a program would diminish illegal immigration by creating a legal avenue for people to enter the U.S.<sup>7</sup>

## **A Path to Legalization**

Most undocumented workers are law-abiding, hardworking individuals who pay their taxes and contribute to our society. They are essential to many sectors of our economy. By allowing undocumented workers an opportunity to come out of the shadows, register with the government, go through security checks, and earn permanent legal status, the rule of law can be restored in our workplaces and communities.

## **Reduction of the Multi-Year Backlogs**

U.S. citizens and legal permanent residents are regularly required to wait 7-10 years (and sometimes up to 20 years) to reunite with their close family members. Such long separations undermine one of the central goals of our immigration system: family unity. Relatedly, backlogs for employment-based immigrant visas have expanded dramatically for workers with certain skill sets from certain countries. These backlogs make it difficult for employers to attract and retain the best and brightest talent from around the world, thus undermining our competitiveness in the global economy.

## **Effective Security and Immigration Enforcement**

By encouraging those who are already here to come out of the shadows, and by creating legal channels to provide for the future flow of workers, we can restore the rule of law in our workplaces and communities and focus our enforcement resources on those who mean us harm. Smart enforcement should include effective inspections and screening practices, fair proceedings, efficient processing, and strategies that crack down on criminal smugglers and employers who exploit workers. At the same time, our border security practices must facilitate the cross-border flow of goods and people that is essential to our economy.

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<sup>6</sup> Organizations which endorse these or similar points include the American Immigration Lawyers Association, National Council of La Raza, members of the Interfaith Immigration Coalition, and more.

<sup>7</sup> This and the following three paragraphs are adapted from *Making the Case for Comprehensive Immigration Reform*, by the American Immigration Lawyers Association (AILA).

# Federal, State, and Local Legislation

- The UUA, along with hundreds of other organizations, **supports Rep. Luis Gutierrez's Comprehensive Immigration Reform for America's Security and Prosperity Act of 2009 (CIR-ASAP), H.R. 4321.** The CIR ASAP Act would provide effective, responsible solutions to both the human rights and the economic problems caused by the current immigration system. Only the federal government can regulate immigration. See the CIR Action Center at: [http://salsa.democracynaction.org/o/1272/p/dia/action/public/?action\\_KEY=2260](http://salsa.democracynaction.org/o/1272/p/dia/action/public/?action_KEY=2260).

*The government's failure to fix our broken system has caused towns, cities, and states to pass their own limited immigration laws. Some common enforcement measures that towns and states have taken or proposed include:*

- **English-only ordinances** stigmatize language minority groups and make it difficult for people of limited English proficiency to obtain needed services.
- **Requiring proof of legal residence or citizenship in order to receive a driver's license or state ID** makes it difficult for undocumented workers to find jobs, commute to work, and apply for services which require identification. These restrictions endanger all drivers, because some people will be forced to drive without having been certified.
- **Authorizing local police offers to question people about their immigration status and detain them under the Department of Homeland Security's 287(g) program** causes immigrants and their family members to fear reporting crimes, which endangers all residents. It also encourages racial profiling and stigmatization of people of color, minority ethnicities, or foreign nationalities.

Section 287(g) of the Act made it possible for the Secretary of Homeland Security to enter into agreements with state and local law enforcement agencies which permit officers to enforce immigration laws during their regular, daily law enforcement activities.

While 287(g) agreements can be useful in removing dangerous criminals, policy flaws have enabled racial profiling and other abuses, creating mistrust between immigrant communities and law enforcers. This mistrust can cause undocumented immigrants and their family to refrain from reporting crimes because they worry that they'll put themselves or their loved ones at risk of deportation. In the wake of a grassroots campaign against Sheriff Arpaio in Maricopa County, Arizona, and a highly critical Government Accountability Report, **the federal government has announced a rewrite of the 287(g) program. In the meantime, communities are working to suspend current 287(g) agreements and block new ones until the program has been rewritten.** According to data from ICE, there are currently sixty-three active Memorandum of Agreements that authorize 287(g) programs. Check ICE's page on delegation of immigration authority at [http://www.ice.gov/partners/287g/Section287\\_g.htm](http://www.ice.gov/partners/287g/Section287_g.htm) for a complete list and more information about the program.

## Immigrant-Friendly Local Legislation

Local and state legislation can also provide a safe space for immigrants and protect or reinforce their rights. Examples of immigrant-friendly legislation include laws which confer "sanctuary" status on a town or city, or protect accessibility of services.

## “Piecemeal” Bills for Immigrant Justice

*On the federal level, there are also bills that have been introduced in Congress that address immigration in a piecemeal fashion. These bills affect only one or several parts of immigration policy. Some would be beneficial, while others would be harmful, and still others are mixed.*

*Bills in the 111<sup>th</sup> Congress that would further immigrant justice include:*

**Reuniting American Families Act, S 1085; HR 2709** – This bill includes various reforms that would facilitate the reunification of families. The House bill, introduced by Rep. Honda (CA-D), includes the Uniting American Families Act (described below).

**Uniting American Families Act, HR 1024** - Rep. Nadler's (NY-8) proposed legislation would **allow U.S. citizens and lawful permanent residents to sponsor same-sex permanent partners for immigration purposes**. This would resolve the plight of an estimated 35,820 binational same-sex couples living together in the U.S.

**Child Citizen Protection Act, HR 182** – Rep. Serrano's (NY-16) proposed legislation would allow immigration judges to take the welfare of a citizen child into consideration and **prevent the deportation of undocumented parents** when deemed to be in the child's best interests. This would offer hope to families which include at least one non-citizen parent and a U.S. citizen child—15% of all families in the U.S.

**Immigration Oversight and Fairness Act, HR 1215** – Rep. Roybal-Allard's (CA-34) proposed legislation would **improve detention conditions, protect immigrant children, and create alternatives for incarceration**.

**Border Security and Responsibility Act of 2009, HR 2076** – Rep. Grijalva's (AZ-7) proposed legislation would **allow land managers, local officials, and local communities to have a say in border security decisions, and ensure that laws intended to protect air, water, wildlife, culture, health and safety are fully upheld**.

**DREAM Act, HR 1751; S 729** - The Development, Relief, and Education for Alien Minors Act would create a path to citizenship for undocumented young adults who have lived in the US for 5 years, have a high school diploma or GED, and good moral character. DREAM would require participants to either complete two years of college or serve two years in the military. Critics feel that DREAM will function as a *de facto* recruiting mechanism that primarily affects low-income people of color. Proponents feel that it is disempowering to assume that DREAM participants cannot be entrusted with personal choices, especially when DREAM might be an individual's best hope for legalization. **Because of this conflict, the UUA does not take an official stance on DREAM, and recommends that individuals engage in careful research and reflection to make their own decision.**

Stay up-to-date on immigration bills by signing up for the  
**UU Immigration News Activist Bulletin** at <http://tinyurl.com/rc83tp>  
Be sure to check the box next to “Immigration”!

# Immigration and the Economy

## Why People Come to the United States

*In order to address the issue of mass migration to the U.S., we must understand the root causes of this migration: poverty, conflict, oppression. Part of our responsibility is to study what effect U.S. foreign and economic policies may have on increasing poverty and oppression in the countries from which many immigrants come. As the Catholic Bishops of the US said . . . "We oppose efforts to stem migration that do not adequately address its root causes and that permit the continuation of the political, social, and economic inequalities that contribute to it."*  
—Statement of Principles on Immigration Issues, Interfaith Worker Justice Board of Directors

Excerpt from ***Why Immigrant Workers Are Coming to the U.S., and How We Can and Need to Work Together***, by Garrett Brown, Coordinator of Maquiladora Health and Safety Support Network. Online at <http://tinyurl.com/o44n6j>

**As bad as NAFTA has been for workers in the U.S., it has been a catastrophe for Mexican working people.** In the Mexican countryside, 2 million farmers have been driven off the land by subsidized U.S. imports. Imports of U.S. corn have increased . . . while the price of corn for Mexican farmers has dropped by 70%. Starvation has emptied out rural villages of everyone but the old and very young. For Mexican workers, their productivity has increased 45% since NAFTA went into effect in 1994, but their real wages have dropped by 22% over the same period. In 1975, the average Mexican wage was 23% of the average U.S. manufacturing wage, but by 2002, Mexican wages were only 12% of the average U.S. wage. For many immigrant workers, one hour of the California minimum wage is more money than they make for an entire day in Mexico.

**Young people in Mexico—who make up a large portion of the immigrant workers in the U.S.—have it particularly bad.** The Bank of Mexico has reported that one million new jobs are needed every year for young people entering the job market for the first time—but only 500,000 to 600,000 jobs a year have been created over the last decade. . . . This means that there will be no jobs whatever for 400,000 young people coming into the workforce in Mexico this year. . . . Of the 110 million people in Mexico, some 54 million live in poverty with incomes less than \$3 a day, while 13 million Mexicans live in “extreme poverty” on less than \$1 a day. The Mexican government itself has admitted that 82% of the working population has less income than what is need for a “basic subsistence” life.

**So today – 13 years after NAFTA went into effect—19 million more Mexicans are living in poverty than in 1994. . .** In these circumstances, Mexicans have three choices: 1) work in the “informal sector” with no formal wages or benefits and in competition with the 30-60% of the economically active population already there; 2) go to work in the maquiladoras on the U.S.-Mexico border for wages of \$1 an hour; or 3) come to the U.S., with or without papers, to work whatever jobs they can find. It’s worth thinking about what we—you and I—what would we do in these circumstances. I think we would also come north looking for work to send money home.

# Immigration's Impact on the United States' Economy

## *Immigration Myths and Facts*

*American Civil Liberties Union, January 2008*

**Immigration has a positive effect on the American economy as a whole and on the income of native-born workers.** . . . On average, U.S. natives benefit from immigration in that immigrants tend to complement natives, not substitute for them. Immigrants have different skills, which allow higher-skilled native workers to increase productivity and thus increase their incomes. Also, as the native-born U.S. population becomes older and better educated, young immigrant workers fill gaps in the low-skilled labor markets.

With respect to wages, in a 1997 study, the National Research Council estimated the annual wage gain due to immigration for U.S. workers to be \$10 billion each year. In 2007 CEA estimated the gain at over \$30 billion per year. **The CEA acknowledges that an increase in immigrant workers is likely to have some negative impact on the wages of low-skilled native workers, but they found this impact to be relatively small and went on to conclude that reducing immigration “would be a poorly-targeted and inefficient way to assist low-wage Americans.”**

In addition to having an overall positive affect on the average wages of American workers, an increase in immigrant workers also tends to increase employment rates among the native-born. According to a Pew Hispanic Center study, between 2000 and 2004 “there was a positive correlation between the increase in the foreign-born population and the employment of native-born workers in 27 states and the District of Columbia.” These states included all the major destination states for immigrants and together they accounted for 67% of all native-born workers.

California, for example, saw an increase in wages of natives by about four percent from 1990 to 2004—a period of large influx of immigrants to the state—due to the complimentary skills of immigrant workers and an increase in the demand for tasks performed by native workers.

- [www.aclu.org/immigrants/34870pub20080411.html](http://www.aclu.org/immigrants/34870pub20080411.html)

For more resources on immigration and the economy, see

<http://tinyurl.com/nbayba>

## *Immigration's Economic Impact*

*Council of Economic Advisors, June 2007*

An analysis of the relationship between growth in the foreign-born population and the employment outcomes of native-born workers revealed wide variations across the 50 states and the District of Columbia. **No consistent pattern emerges to show that native-born workers suffered or benefited from increased numbers of foreign-born workers.**

In 2000, nearly 25% of native-born workers lived in states where rapid growth in the foreign-born population between 1990 and 2000 was associated with favorable outcomes for the native born.

. . . Only 15% of native-born workers resided in states where rapid growth in the foreign-born population was associated with negative outcomes for the native born.

The remaining 60% of native-born workers lived in states where the growth in the foreign-born population was below average, but those native workers did not consistently experience favorable employment outcomes. The same results emerged from the analysis of data for 2000 to 2004.

. . . **The size of the foreign-born workforce is also unrelated to the employment prospects for native-born workers.** The relative youth and low levels of education among foreign workers also appear to have no bearing on the employment outcomes of native-born workers of similar schooling and age.

- [http://georgewbush-whitehouse.archives.gov/cea/cea\\_immigration\\_062007.html](http://georgewbush-whitehouse.archives.gov/cea/cea_immigration_062007.html)

# Facts & Concepts

## Facts

- **Immigrants, no matter what their status, pay the same taxes that citizens do—**—sales tax, real estate taxes, gasoline taxes. Some work in the informal economy and are paid in cash, so they don't have federal and state income taxes, or social security taxes, deducted. So do some citizens [e.g., baby-sitters, snow shovelers, etc.]. Many immigrants work in the formal economy, in which case they have all the same taxes deducted from their paychecks as citizens do. About three-fourths of undocumented workers do this through presenting false social security numbers. Taxes are deducted from their paychecks—but if they are undocumented, they have no access to the benefits they are paying for, like social security or unemployment benefits. As of 2005, Social Security was receiving about \$7 billion a year through false social security numbers—allowing it to break even, because that's about the same amount as the difference between what it paid out in benefits and what it received in payroll taxes.<sup>8</sup>
- **90% of U.S. workers experience wage increases as a result of immigration,** with wage increases of \$30-80 billion a year (or 0.7 – 3.4 percent) for native workers with at least a high school degree. Only natives without a high school degree, about 10 percent of the workforce, experience wage declines, and they are more modest (about 1.1 percent). Other studies indicate that migration has not caused a decline in low-skilled native wages relative to skilled natives. The wage benefits of immigration are minimized — and the harmful wage effects of migration on low-skilled workers increase — when workers are unauthorized. (Source: Social Security Administration)<sup>9</sup>
- **Immigrants have lower crime rates than natives.** Among men aged 18 to 40, immigrants are much less likely to be incarcerated than natives. (Source: Butcher and Piehl)<sup>10</sup>

## Concepts

- **Nativism:** Nativism is an attitude of favoring native or established inhabitants of an area over newcomers or immigrants. Nativism is sometimes understood as also having a racial component of ethnocentrism or anti-immigrant racism.
- **Remittances:** Remittances are transfers of money from immigrants to family members in their home community. Remittances from immigrant workers to their home countries in 2006 amounted to over \$100 billion. This total was far more than the official development assistance provided by developed countries; larger than the export incomes of many home countries; and greater than the private investment received by the home countries. The survival of entire communities, individual families, and even the countries they live in, are dependent on remittances from immigrants working outside their home countries.<sup>10</sup>
- **Rights:** Natural or human rights are inherent, while civil rights are bestowed by the nation in which one lives. At various times in U.S. history, civil and human rights have been denied on the basis of race, ethnicity, gender, or wealth. Today, many people in the U.S. are struggling to determine whether it is appropriate to allot and deny civil rights on the basis of citizenship, and if so, whether the denial of certain civil rights may violate a noncitizen's human rights.

<sup>8</sup> Aviva Chomsky, *They Take Our Jobs! And 20 Other Myths about Immigration* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2007), p. 36 – 38

<sup>9</sup> *Immigration's Economic Impact* (See p. 17 for URL)

<sup>10</sup> *Why Immigrant Workers Are Coming to the U.S.* (See p. 17 for URL)

# UU Grounding for Standing with Immigrants

## ‘We Are One’

*2009 statement from Rev. Peter Morales, UUA President*



As thousands of economic refugees flee Chiapas, others from Central America cross Chiapas on their way north. They are heading for jobs at luxurious beach resorts filled with Americans and Europeans, or for the slums of Mexico City. Some of the most adventurous risk takers head for la frontera, the newly militarized border that tries to separate desperate Mexicanos from jobs in the United States. Hundreds die trying to cross the desert, and now there are Anglo vigilantes on the border attempting to “protect” America from the frightful prospect of more illegal immigrants. U.S. citizens are afraid, and their fear is stoked by reactionary ideologues and political opportunists in both major parties.

The illegal immigrants who are already here are afraid, too. There are about twelve million of them. They don’t know when a raid by federal authorities will break up their families. Children don’t know when their mother or father will be taken away.

In the case of the recent rapid increase in immigration from Mexico and Central America, most U.S. citizens tend to think we are somehow passive victims. These aliens are pouring over our border and must be stopped. The truth is very different. Our economic policies, which disproportionately benefit the wealthy, are helping to create wrenching economic dislocations in Mexico, Guatemala, and Nicaragua. Many of the people trying to sneak into the United States were pushed out of their homes by U.S. policies.

I am not suggesting that our country does not need to control its borders, and I do not pretend to have all the policy answers. I do know this: We cannot pretend that we had nothing to do with the creation of this problem. I also know this: We are all connected. We are in this together.

Let us take a moment to get some historical perspective on our situation. The fact [is] that the white Texan revolt against Mexico was founded on the desire to extend black slavery... After winning their quick little war of independence, Texas joined the union as a slave state. The border between the United States and Mexico was created to make space for slavery. We are building fences and guard towers along that border to keep Mexicans from reentering land that was taken from them. Of course, the Mexican elite, mostly of European descent, were not exactly blameless: The land that undocumented Americans stole from them was land they had previously stolen from Native Americans.

As a religious people who affirm human compassion, advocate for human rights, and seek justice, we must never make the mistake of confusing a legal right with a moral right. The forced removal of Native Americans from their land and onto reservations was legal. The importation and sale of African slaves was legal. South African apartheid was legal. The confiscation of the property of Jews at the beginning of the Nazi regime was legal. The Spanish

Inquisition was legal. Crucifying Jesus was legal. Burning Michael Servetus at the stake for his unitarian theology was legal. The powerful have always used the legal system to oppress the powerless.

It is true that as citizens we should respect the rule of law. More importantly, though, our duty is to create laws founded on our highest sense of justice, equity, and compassion. Loud voices urge us to choose fear, denial, reactionary nationalism, and racism. We must resist and choose the better way urged by every major religious tradition. We must choose the path of compassion and hope. We must choose a path that is founded on the recognition that we are connected, that we are all in this together.

These are the teachings of every great tradition. At the core of the teachings of Jesus is the conviction that we are all one. We are all God's children, and we are all equal. We find the same message in every tradition: We are one. We are connected. We are brothers and sisters. If we truly accept that we are all part of a greater whole, that what unites and transcends us is ultimately more important than our illusion of individuality, how might that guide us?

I do not have all the policy answers on immigration or the related issues of public education, health care, and the economy. I do know this: Breaking up poor working families who have lived among us for years does not feel like justice, equity, and compassion in action. Refusing minimal health services to young children does not feel like the way we should treat members of our human family. Having our police forces profile brown people does not feel like breaking down the walls of tribalism. Creating a huge wall, complete with barbed wire, across hundreds of miles of border does not feel neighborly.

There must be a better way, and you and I must help build it. Barbed wire is not the answer. More border guards and more deportations are not the answer. Paranoia and panic will solve nothing.

We must remember that we are all immigrant stock, every single one of us living on this continent. Even Native Americans at one time immigrated here from Asia.

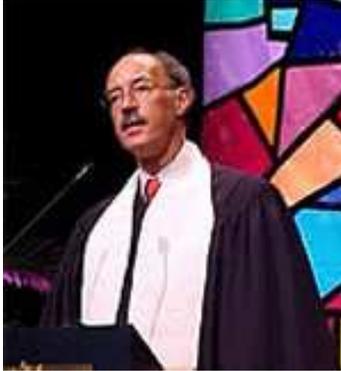
We must also acknowledge that we helped to create the situation in which displaced people look to find a home here. America has already been transformed by the latest waves of immigration. Our children and grandchildren are going to live in a multicultural society—a society of moo-shoo burritos, egg roll tacos, and whole wheat tortillas. We need not be afraid of that multicultural society. Fear leads to violence and repression.

Instead, let us embrace the possibilities before us. Let us be guided by love and hope. We are people who have always affirmed human diversity. We have always looked to the future and seen new possibilities. We must do so again. Let us be the people who break down the arbitrary barriers that divide us from them. We are one, and love and hope will guide us. Let us, together with all our brothers and sisters, build a new way

Excerpted from *A People So Bold*, (Beacon Press), forthcoming, 2010.

## Unitarian Universalist Association Supports the New Sanctuary Movement

*May 8, 2007 statement from Rev. William G. Sinkford, UUA President 2001 - 2009*



“Grounded in the Unitarian Universalist affirmation of the inherent worth and dignity of every person, the Unitarian Universalist Association of Congregations endorses the New Sanctuary Movement, a movement of prophetic hospitality and public witness to bring about real change in the immigration policy of the United States. The UUA joins other people of faith and conscience in calling for the passage of just and comprehensive immigration reform and an immediate stop to federal raids that separate parents from their children and create a climate of fear and repression.

In the original Sanctuary movement in the 1980s, Unitarian Universalists joined Catholic, Protestant and Jewish congregations in providing sanctuary to Central American refugees. The Sanctuary movement protected tens of thousands of individuals and families who were largely being denied asylum by the government. This movement, initiated by people of faith, ultimately changed policy on the national level.

It is time for a new sanctuary movement that stands with immigrants who are resisting deportation through legal channels. Driven by the prospect of economic opportunity and by American businesses voracious need for cheap labor, undocumented immigration is on the rise. America has created an under-class of residents who are refused the dignity and civil protections that come with citizenship. Our current system keeps families apart, both through a huge backlog in family-based immigration, and through the unjust detention and deportation of immigrant mothers, fathers, brothers and sisters.

We are also called to acknowledge that racism has blinded many Americans to what takes place in our own kitchens, workshops, and fields. For our nation to be whole, we must acknowledge that our lives of privilege are supported in thousands of ways by people whose labor is invisible and whose suffering is hidden. Led by people of faith from many backgrounds who stand in solidarity with immigrant families, the New Sanctuary Movement seeks to take a united, public, moral stand for immigrant rights; to protect immigrants against hate, workplace discrimination and unjust deportation; and to witness to the suffering of immigrant workers and families. Unitarian Universalists join in this call for solidarity because we know that as people of faith, our concern for family values needs to embrace these families as well. Unitarian Universalists stand on the side of love.”

## Excerpts from *Santuario: Sanctuary for All*

Dec. 12, 2007 Sermon by Rev. Kim Crawford Harvie of Arlington Street Church, Boston

Complete text available at <http://www.ascboston.org/worship/text/071202.pdf>

Audio available at <http://www.ascboston.org/downloads/podcast/071202.mp3>

Those of us who . . . have made of this place the soul of Sunday on our spiritual journey, share a commitment to welcoming the stranger—the not-yet befriended—commitment to radical hospitality. This is the heart of our faith: love, service, justice, peace.

\* \* \*

Undocumented workers live under the constant threat of deportation, vulnerable to employers who pay them sub-standard wages and afraid to speak out when their rights are violated. As long as they remain outside the full protection of U.S. employment laws, ‘they can become a subordinate labor class, which helps companies depress wage and benefits standards throughout entire industries.’ America was founded on the principle of equal opportunity. Who will defend that high ideal? Who, if not we?

\* \* \*

As Unitarian Universalists, we stand at the intersection of every major world religion that calls us to this welcome:

The Jewish people, remembering the time of their enslavement as strangers in Egypt, begin their credo with the words, “An ancient Aramean was my father.”<sup>11</sup> “You shall not wrong a stranger or oppress him,” says their law, “for you were strangers in the land of Egypt.”<sup>12</sup>

Christians worship a Messiah who was homeless; Jesus said, “For I was hungry, and you gave me food; I was thirsty, and you gave me drink; I was a stranger, and you took me in; naked and you clothed me; sick and you visited me; in prison and you came to see me. . . . Inasmuch as you have done this unto one of the least of these my brethren, you have done it unto me.”<sup>13</sup>

And in the Qur’an, the central religious text of Islam, it is written that Muslims 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].”<sup>14</sup>

As Unitarian Universalists, each of these faith traditions informs the first principle of our faith: the commitment to affirm and promote the inherent worth and dignity of every being.

Find more sermons on immigration by Unitarian Universalists  
online at <http://tinyurl.com/p9kbc>

<sup>11</sup> Deuteronomy 26:5

<sup>12</sup> Exodus 22:21

<sup>13</sup> Matthew 25:35-36; 40

<sup>14</sup> Qur’an 4:36

# Excerpts from UUA Social Justice Statements Passed by the General Assembly

*For complete versions of these statements, see [www.uua.org/actions](http://www.uua.org/actions)*

**Supporting human rights for all people, including immigrants, is a core Unitarian Universalist value.** At our first General Assembly in 1961, we passed a resolution on the rights of immigrant workers, followed by a 1963 resolution calling for immigration reform. Throughout the 1970s we supported immigrant farm worker campaigns, and in the 1980s, many Unitarian Universalist congregations were actively involved in the Sanctuary movement. Three General Assemblies of the UUA endorsed sanctuary for refugees and the UUA Board of Trustees established a fund to support individuals seeking sanctuary and to aid churches providing sanctuary. Our 2004 Statement on Civil Liberties affirmed our commitment to advocate for the right to due process of immigrants, refugees and foreign nationals. In 2006 and 2007, the General Assembly passed Actions of Immediate Witness to support immigrant communities, including a call for an immediate moratorium on federal raids and resulting deportations.

***Our Unitarian Universalist faith calls us to recognize that no one is "the stranger," to affirm and promote the inherent worth and dignity of every person, and to welcome our neighbors.***

**General Resolutions (GR) and Statement of Conscience (SOC) have called for:**

- Reform of labor legislation and employment standards to provide greater protection for workers, including the right to organize and bargain collectively, protection from unsafe working conditions, and protection from unjust dismissal (*Working for a Just Economic Community, GR, 1997*)
- Access to adequate housing, social services, child care, adult daycare, education, health care, legal services, financial services, and transportation (*Economic Injustice, Poverty, and Racism: We Can Make a Difference! SC, 2000*)
- Opposition to profiling based on nationality, ethnicity, or religion (*Civil Liberties, SC, 2004*)
- Investigation and monitoring of the practices, standards, and care at INS detention centers (*Children Held by the United States Immigration and Naturalization Service, GR, 1992*)

**Through Actions of Immediate Witness (AIW) the General Assembly has called for:**

- An immediate moratorium of all inhumane raids and resulting deportations (*Support Immigrant Families—Stop the ICE Raids, AIW, 2007*)
- Just and comprehensive immigration reform (*Support Immigrant Justice, AIW, 2006*)
- The creation of an accessible and timely process to obtain residency and citizenship (*Support Immigrant Justice*)
- Equitable treatment of all workers (*Support Immigrant Justice*)
- Access to government and its democratic processes and to health care, education, and police protection for all (*Support Immigrant Justice*)
- Opposition to attempts at all levels of government to further criminalize or demonize immigrants and undocumented individuals and the people who give them humanitarian aid (*Support Immigrant Justice*)
- Opposition to legislation by any governmental body that establishes any language as our "national language" (*Support Immigrant Justice*)
- Opposition to the further militarization of United States borders (*Support Immigrant Justice*)

**For more information on UUA policy, see [www.uua.org/immigration](http://www.uua.org/immigration)**

# What You Can Do

## Check the UUA.org Immigration Resources page

- Visit [www.uua.org/immigration](http://www.uua.org/immigration) for continuously updated resources, including a list of state and local networks, states with *Welcoming Immigrants/Welcoming America* campaigns, UU resources, and federal organizations.

## Support Federal Advocacy Efforts

- Download the Immigration Toolkit at [www.uua.org/socialjustice/issues/immigration/reform/toolkit/index.shtml](http://www.uua.org/socialjustice/issues/immigration/reform/toolkit/index.shtml) with information and resources on contacting elected officials in support of comprehensive immigration reform.
- *Sign up for the UU Immigration News Activist Bulletin* at <http://tinyurl.com/qkzpd>.
- *Get action alerts on your cell phone* about raids, immigration reform, national congressional hearings, and local events on your cell phone by texting “Justice” for updates in English or “Justicia” for updates in Spanish to 69866. For more information, visit <http://www.communitychange.org/our-projects/firm>

*Become involved with the Interfaith Immigration Coalition* The Interfaith Immigration Coalition is a partnership of over twenty faith-based organizations, including the Unitarian Universalist Association, committed to enacting fair and humane immigration reform that reflects our mandate to welcome the stranger and treat all human beings with dignity and respect. Coalition members work together to advocate for just and equitable immigration policies, educate faith communities, and serve immigrant populations around the country. Find out how your congregation can become involved at <http://interfaithimmigration.org/>

## Partnerships & Actions in Your Community

- *Partner with Immigrant Rights organizations in your community and state.* Check out these websites’ listings of organizations that work on immigration related issues:  
Rights Working Group - <http://tinyurl.com/o9l6az>  
National Network for Immigrant and Refugee Rights - <http://tinyurl.com/oze4uu>  
National Pro-Immigrant Organization - <http://tinyurl.com/q2uveh>
- *Join the New Sanctuary Movement (NSM).* Support immigrant families suffering from unjust laws and raids through providing sanctuary, educating, advocating, and witnessing on behalf of immigrant rights. NSM calls for a moratorium on federal raids and organizes ministry at detention centers. Dozens of UU congregations across the country participate in 30 interfaith NSM coalitions. See [www.newsanctuarymovement.org](http://www.newsanctuarymovement.org) to learn more and sign up for the NSM newsletter. Find info on UUs and sanctuary at <http://tinyurl.com/rc3ft2>.
- *Sponsor a Town Hall Forum on Immigration.* Read about First Parish UU’s forum in Framingham, MA, at <http://tinyurl.com/q7degc>.

## Partnerships & Actions in Your Community, continued

- *Partner with an immigrant church by asking their pastor or lay leaders speak to your congregation. Invite immigrants to share their stories in your pulpits, meetings, and forums. Consider partnering with a church with a high immigrant population to hold a joint potluck. For ideas from the UUA Washington Office, see: Potluck Ideas – [www.uua.org/documents/washingtonoffice/immigration/potluck\\_ideas.pdf](http://www.uua.org/documents/washingtonoffice/immigration/potluck_ideas.pdf)*
- *Host an Immigration Legal Clinic at your congregation. Ask lawyers, social workers and advocates in your congregation to volunteer for a monthly clinic. For an example, see *Justice For Our Neighbors*, a project of the United Methodist Church at <http://tinyurl.com/okddhy>. Before jumping in, it's a good idea to see if something like this is already being offered in your community by another organization. If so, ask that organization about ways in which you can support their program, rather than starting your own and "reinventing the wheel."*
- *Witness at detention centers and minister to those inside. On any given day, over 27,000 immigrants are detained in almost 200 prison-like facilities across the country. For a map of facilities known to detain immigrants in removal proceedings and ICE district offices, check the Detention Watch Network's *Detention Map*, online at <http://detentionwatchnetwork.org/node/124>.*



## Support Unitarian Universalist Organizations

- *No More Deaths* is an official ministry of the Unitarian Universalist Church of Tucson, Arizona, which provides humanitarian aid to border crossers. Learn more, make a donation, sign up to volunteer, or find out how your congregation can assemble and send "migrant packs" at <http://nomoredeaths.org/>
- *Unitarian Universalist Refugee and Immigrant Services and Education, Inc. (UURISE)* provides low-cost immigration counseling and representation, refugee resettlement services, educational and advocacy programs, and outreach to immigrant victims of human trafficking, persecution, torture, domestic violence and other crimes. Support UURISE at [www.uurise.org](http://www.uurise.org).

## Incorporate Immigrant Justice into a Worship Service

- Sponsor a Welcoming Immigrants Justice Sunday. Include a sermon, religious education, an advocacy action and/or a direct service component. Have a "Welcoming Immigrants" sign on your congregation's marquee.
- Dedicate a Sunday's congregational offering to an organization that supports the rights of immigrants in your hometown or to a UU organization.
- Offer a prayer or reading for immigrants, such as <http://tinyurl.com/oanmtc>. Find ideas and examples in Unitarian Universalist sermons at <http://tinyurl.com/p9kbcb>.
- Explore scriptural wisdom on immigration from world religions. Collections online at <http://tinyurl.com/o9nr7u> and <http://tinyurl.com/qb6vyd>.

# Resources for Education and Discussion

## Handbook

- *For You Were Once a Stranger: Immigration in the U.S. Through the Lens of Faith*, from Interfaith Worker Justice. Online at [www.iwj.org/index.cfm/immigration](http://www.iwj.org/index.cfm/immigration) -- scroll down to the download link. *For You Were Once a Stranger* is a comprehensive immigration toolkit that helps people of faith reflect on what their religious traditions say about immigrations and engage in meaningful action for achieving just and humane immigration reform. Immigrants' stories in their own voices are included. A *Summary and Guide* are now available for download as well at [www.iwj.org/index.cfm/immigration](http://www.iwj.org/index.cfm/immigration) and scroll down.

## Books

- *They Take Our Jobs!: And 20 Other Myths About Immigration*, by Aviva Chomsky  
Available from Beacon Press at [www.uuabookstore.org/productdetails.cfm?PC=272](http://www.uuabookstore.org/productdetails.cfm?PC=272)  
In clear, straightforward prose, Chomsky dismantles twenty of the most common assumptions and beliefs underlying anti-immigrant rhetoric.
- *Illegal People: How Globalization Creates Migration and Criminalizes Immigrants*, by David Bacon.  
Available from Beacon Press at [www.beacon.org/productdetails.cfm?SKU=4226](http://www.beacon.org/productdetails.cfm?SKU=4226)  
Veteran photojournalist David Bacon explores how globalization drives people from Latin America and Asia to migrate, while at the same time, U.S. immigration policy makes the labor of those displaced people a crime.

## Feature Length Documentaries

- *Made in L.A.* - <http://www.madeinla.com/>  
*Made in L.A.* follows the three Latina immigrants working in Los Angeles garment sweatshops as they embark on an odyssey to win basic labor protections from trendy clothing retailer Forever 21. Materials to hold community screenings are available for order on the website.
- *The Least of These* - <http://theleastofthese-film.com/>  
Detention of immigrant children in a former medium-security prison in Texas leads to controversy when activist attorneys discover troubling conditions at the facility. This compelling documentary film explores the role—and limits—of community activism, and considers how American rights and values apply to the least powerful among us. This film can be watched online for free at [http://www.snagfilms.com/films/title/the\\_least\\_of\\_these/](http://www.snagfilms.com/films/title/the_least_of_these/)
- *Sentenced Home* - [www.pbs.org/independentlens/sentencedhome](http://www.pbs.org/independentlens/sentencedhome)  
*Sentenced Home* follows three young Cambodian Americans through the deportation process. Raised in inner city Seattle, they pay an unbearable price for mistakes made as teenagers. Caught between tragic pasts and an uncertain future, each young man confronts a legal system that offers no second chances. Watch free online at [www.snagfilms.com/films/title/sentenced\\_home/](http://www.snagfilms.com/films/title/sentenced_home/).
- *Dying to Get In* - <http://www.bretttolley.com/dying-to-get-in>  
*Dying to Get In* provides an intimate perspective of border crossing in the Arizona desert.

## Dramatic Films

- *The Visitor* - <http://www.takepart.com/thevisitor/>  
In this moving fictional drama, an American college professor and a young immigrant couple grapple with the treatment of immigrants post-9/11. The film makes issues of due process, detention and deportation compellingly visible.
- *La misma luna/Under the Same Moon* - <http://www.foxsearchlight.com/underthesamemoon/>  
This Spanish and English language film tells the parallel stories of a woman from Mexico working as an undocumented immigrant in Los Angeles, and her nine year old son who crosses the border to find her.

## Bisexual, Gay, Lesbian, and Transgender Resources

- Immigration Equality  
<http://www.immigrationequality.org/>  
Immigration Equality is engaged in justice work where immigration and BGLT issues intersect. Available on their website are two excellent reports entitled *Family, Unvalued: Discrimination, Denial, and the Fate of Binational Same-Sex Couples Under U.S. Law*, and *HIV & Immigration: The Basics*. The latter is available in both English and Spanish. The website also contains a section with information on how transgendered people are affected by immigration laws.

## And More . . .

- *Border Stories: A Mosaic Documentary*  
<http://www.borderstories.org/>  
“Border Stories is re-imagining the documentary, one with no beginning, middle, or end. Its only linear aspect is the border itself. Our crew travels the length of the U.S.–Mexico border, from Brownsville, TX, to Tijuana, Mexico, in search of stories that portray the human face of this politically and emotionally-charged region.”
- *Nuestras Historias, Nuestros Sueños/Our Stories, Our Dreams*  
<http://cds.aas.duke.edu/nuestrashistorias/gallery.html#>  
Have a phone? Dial (919) 415-2238 to hear the recorded stories of farm workers in English and in Spanish.
- *What Would You Do?*  
On January 7, 2009, ABC News ran an episode of *What Would You Do?* that explored racism against Spanish-speaking day laborers by observing bystander's reactions to staged discrimination. The fifteen minute video is a powerful and moving conversation starter for how people of faith can honor the inherent worth and dignity of immigrants. View *What Would You Do?: Confronting Racism in America Part 1* (8:23 minutes) at <http://tinyurl.com/7kxo8l> and look for the link at the bottom of the screen to view Part 2 (8:24).

# Involving Youth

**The Arrival** - [www.shauntan.net/books.html](http://www.shauntan.net/books.html)

This beautiful book by Shaun Tan tells the story of an immigrant seeking a better life for his family. As a wordless graphic novel, *The Arrival* may seem like a good choice for young children, but its complexity is perhaps even better suited to teenagers and adults.

**Kids Like Me: Voices of the Immigrant Experience** - <http://tinyurl.com/ogbezt>

An appealing and accessible book with 26 narratives written by children and young adult immigrants to the U.S. The book is 296 pages, but the individual narratives are short and can be read on their own.

**ICED Video Game** - [www.icedgame.com/](http://www.icedgame.com/)

Taking on the identity of an immigrant teenager, players must avoid ICE officers, answer questions about immigration, and make everyday choices.



**Shop Till You Drop on a Mexican Wage** - [www.ueinternational.org/shop](http://www.ueinternational.org/shop)

Learn about financial pressures which cause people from Mexico and other economically vulnerable countries to migrate to the U.S. Players pick a profession and go “shopping” to see what workers can buy with their wages in Mexico and in the United States.



***In the U.S., meet Marta Jaramillo, a factory worker in Chicago, Illinois.***

*There, an individual factory worker who has worked 23 years, making fans and heaters, makes around \$11.30 an hour (before deductions).*



***In Mexico, meet Elena Mendoza Zarate, a factory worker in Mexico City.***

*There, an individual factory worker who is a stamping machine operator makes around 12.61 pesos an hour . . . That total wage equals about \$1.13 an hour.*

*Hours an individual factory worker must work to pay for:*

<i>Medium sized Super Value Meal</i>	<i>In the U.S.</i>	<i>In Mexico</i>
<i>US Price: \$4.48 Price in Mexico (in dollars): \$4.57</i>	<i>24 minutes</i>	<i>4 hours, 3 minutes</i>

## Could You Pass the Test for United States Citizenship?

What is one right or freedom from the First Amendment? In what month do we vote for President? What movement tried to end racial discrimination? Try all 100 questions at [www.uscis.gov/files/nativedocuments/100q.pdf](http://www.uscis.gov/files/nativedocuments/100q.pdf)

## Assemble “Migrant Packs” to Support the Humanitarian Aid Work of No More Deaths

No More Deaths was organized in 2004 as a faith-based response to the skyrocketing deaths of border crossers in Arizona. Now an official ministry of the Unitarian Universalist Church of Tucson, No More Deaths prevents hundreds of deaths in the Arizona desert each year through providing humanitarian aid. You can support their life-saving work by assembling “migrant packs” like the ones below and mailing them to:

*No More Deaths  
Unitarian Universalist Church of Tucson  
PO Box 40782  
Tucson, AZ 85717*

### **Food Packs**

Into each gallon-sized closable plastic bag, place 7-10 items, including at least one item from each line below.

- Sports drink
- Single serving cans of meat or tuna with pop-top lids
- Nuts, trail mix, dried fruit, chips, fig bars, or cookies
- Granola, power, or snack bars
- Applesauce, pudding, or fruit cup (with spoon; please place in extra ziplock because they tend to break)
- Peanut butter or cheese filled crackers

### **Personal Hygiene Kits**

Fill gallon-sized plastic bags with the items below.

- Toothbrush in wrapper
- Small toothpaste
- Shampoo
- Soap
- Razor
- Comb
- Washcloth or hand towel (does not need to be new, just clean)

### **Personal Blister Kits**

Fill gallon-sized plastic bags with:

- 1 pair of socks
- 4-6 individual packets of antibiotic ointment (or antiseptic wipes)
- Gauze pads or 1 gauze roll
- 1 roll of tape or several large band-aids
- 10-15 cotton balls

### **First Aid Kits**

Fill small closable plastic bags with:

- 4 to 8 bandages
- Gauze pads
- Small first aid cream or ointment
- Alcohol wipes
- Sunscreen, chapstick, hand cream, or lotion
- Foot care creams, powders, or Moleskin
- Wrapped candy or throat lozenge
- Aspirin, Tylenol, or Advil packets

Find more ways to help at <http://nomoredeaths.org/index.php/Information/donate.html>

Boston Interfaith Community Immigrant Rights March, May 2006. Photo by UU World Editor Chris Walton.

Visit [www.welcomingma.org](http://www.welcomingma.org) to get involved in immigrant justice work in Massachusetts.

Prayer Wall constructed at Midwest Interfaith Immigration Summit in Columbus, Ohio, Sept. 11, 2009. Photos by Lisa Swanson, UUA staff.

Learn how to “Let the Walls Speak” through interactive art at <http://tinyurl.com/qnl5f>

Rev. John Crestwell of Davies Memorial Unitarian Universalist Church spoke at an interfaith press conference coordinated by the Interfaith Immigration Coalition on Feb. 11, 2009. Photo by Lisa Swanson.

Get involved at [www.interfaithimmigration.org](http://www.interfaithimmigration.org)

The Coalition of Immokalee Workers offers free postcards urging justice for migrant farmworkers. These were filled out and mailed by UUs in Washinton, D.C., on Nov. 6, 2008. Photo by Lisa Swanson.

Learn about the Coalition of Immokalee Workers at [www.ciw-online.org/](http://www.ciw-online.org/)



About twenty churches in Kansas City, Missouri, including All Souls UU Church, announced an interfaith coalition in support of immigrant families with a billboard reading, “Love the Immigrant as Yourself” on Sept. 25, 2007. Picture by Freddy Rhoads, online at <http://nsmkc.blogspot.com/>

Visit the Immigrant Justice Advocacy Movement of Kansas City at [www.ijamkc.org/](http://www.ijamkc.org/)

Forty members of the Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Phoenix and about eight members of the Unitarian Universalist Church of Tucson participated in a rally in Phoenix, Arizona, to hold Sheriff Joe Arpaio accountable for his maltreatment of immigrants on Feb. 28, 2009. Photos by Craig McComb.

The rally was organized by the National Day Laborer Organizing Network, online at [www.ndlon.org/](http://www.ndlon.org/)

This resource was prepared by staff at the:

UUA Washington Office for Advocacy; and  
UUA Office for Congregational Advocacy and Witness.

For more information, see: [www.uua.org/immigration](http://www.uua.org/immigration)  
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UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST  
ASSOCIATION OF CONGREGATIONS

