



THE FACTS: TALKING IMMIGRATION



Migration Statistics

Border security funding has increased from \$4.6 billion in 2001 to \$10.4 billion in 2007. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE)'s budget for interior immigration enforcement is over \$5.7 billion in 2010.

The U.S. government detains an estimated 440,000 people each year in over 300 facilities around the U.S., including county jails in Minnesota. The cost of detention is over \$1.7 billion annually.

More than 356,000 immigrants were removed in 2008. 2.2 million immigrants have been deported since 1994.

Worldwide there is an estimated total of 13.9 million refugees and asylum seekers.⁵ In 2006, the U.S. granted asylum or refugee status to **fewer than 5%** of these people.

According to the American Immigration Law Foundation (AILF), an immigrant **pays between \$20,000 and \$80,000** more in taxes than he or she uses in public benefits over a lifetime.

U.S. citizens and lawful permanent residents wait years, often decades, for family members to immigrate to the U.S.

IMMIGRANTS CONTRIBUTE MORE THAN THEY COST.

Restrictionists paint a picture of the “costs” of immigration by comparing taxes paid against benefits used, but fail to tell the whole story. Left out is the massive contribution to the economy made by immigrants: nationwide Hispanic businessowners alone provided jobs to an estimated 1.5 million employees, had receipts of over \$222 billion, and generated \$36.7 billion payroll dollars in 2002 alone. In addition, the roughly 26 million immigrants now in the U.S. who arrived after the age of 18 represent a windfall of roughly \$2.8 trillion to U.S. taxpayers, who get the benefit of their labor without the cost of their upbringing and education

IMMIGRANTS LEARN ENGLISH.

Immigrants are motivated to learn English due to its high economic and social value. Immigrants today learn English at the same rate or more quickly than previous immigrants. Nearly 1.2 million adults attended English as a Second Language classes in 2002-03.

IMMIGRATING ISN'T EASY.

U.S. immigration policy, while generous, is far from unlimited. People often complain that undocumented workers should just “get in line” for a visa, but there really is no line: only 5,000 visas are available for low-skilled workers each year. People may immigrate based only on very close family ties, employer sponsorship, or refugee protection. Families wait years for reunification. A lawful permanent resident faces a wait of more than 5 years to be joined by their spouse. The myth of “anchor babies” conferring status on their undocumented parents is simply untrue – only U.S. citizens who are over age 21 can petition to immigrate their parents.

IMMIGRANTS PAY TAXES.

Everyone, including legal residents, visitors, students, and undocumented people, pays taxes. Immigrants pay sales and property taxes, and every worker on the payroll pays state and federal income taxes. Immigrants are large contributors to – rather than recipients of – Social Security and will play an integral role in financing Social Security as the U.S. population reaches retirement.

IMMIGRANT PROTECTIONS RAISE WAGES OF ALL WORKERS.

Restrictionists often state that immigrants drive down wages, even while data suggests a slight average gain in wages for U.S. workers. Regardless, the best way to protect all workers is to ensure that employers follow wage laws. Instead of blaming immigrants, a better solution is to end the tolerance for exploitive conditions for all workers.

IMMIGRANTS HAVE LITTLE ACCESS TO PUBLIC BENEFITS.

Only refugees, asylees, and a small category of legal immigrants are eligible to receive any public benefits. U.S. citizens or permanent residents who sponsor family members must sign affidavits of support and their income is deemed to be the immigrant's income when determining eligibility for benefits. Even those who are eligible are subject to strict time limits. Undocumented people are not eligible for most public benefits programs, with the exception of emergency medical assistance.

IMMIGRANTS DO NOT CAUSE INCREASES IN CRIME.

Research indicates that higher levels of immigrants either have no effect on crime rates or are associated with lower levels of crime and violence. The incarceration rates of those born in the U.S. is four times higher than of the foreign-born. An influx of new immigrants to high-crime communities may actually transform and revitalize disadvantaged neighborhoods.



THE PUSH FACTORS: EFFECTS OF HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS ABROAD

Migration to the U.S. is migration from somewhere. Migration is often driven by certain factors, including human rights violations, beyond the migrant's control. U.S. immigration law allows a small fraction of the world's refugees to seek safety here, but those fleeing economic human rights violations are left out of the refugee protection system, which provides a safe haven only for those fleeing persecution on account of race, religion, nationality, social group, or political opinion. While the undocumented population is often characterized as "economic migrants" who "choose" to come to the U.S. to improve their lives, this characterization grossly understates the crushing effects of chronic poverty that result in deprivation of the right to food, shelter, education, and work. The role of U.S. foreign, economic, and trade policy is critical in migration patterns. Scholars point to the crippling effects of NAFTA on the Mexican economy and the resulting surge in migration from that country.

A MORAL QUESTION: MINNESOTA'S RELIGIOUS TRADITIONS WELCOME THE STRANGER

Many faith traditions teach us to welcome our brothers and sisters. These values are reflected in scripture and teachings. The Hebrew Bible tells us: "The strangers who sojourn with you shall be to you as the natives among you, and you shall love them as yourself; for you were strangers in the land of Egypt (Leviticus 19:33-34)." In the New Testament, Jesus tells us to welcome the stranger (cf. Matthew 25:35), for "what you do to the least of my brethren, you do unto me (Matthew 25:40)." The Qur'an tells us that we should "serve God and do good to orphans, those in need, neighbors who are near, neighbors who are strangers, the companion by your side, the wayfarer that you meet, [and those who have nothing] (4:36)." Immigration laws should reflect our values as a nation and as a people of faith.

THE BOTTOM LINE: MIGRANTS DO HAVE RIGHTS

We are all entitled to treatment with dignity and respect. Human rights protect everyone, regardless of whether we are in a foreign country and regardless of whether we entered that country illegally.

The U.S. Constitution protects citizens and non-citizens alike. While some Constitutional protections are limited to citizens, most extend to "persons" and apply regardless of immigration status. The right to remain silent, freedom from unwarranted searches, and the right to due process all are guaranteed regardless of immigration status.

International human rights law guarantees that everyone, regardless of immigration status, has the right to freedom from arbitrary arrest, detention, interference with privacy, family, home, correspondence, or property. Everyone has the right to due process under law. Human rights law also guarantees respect for the unity of the family, access to just working conditions, protection of refugees, and freedom from discrimination on the basis of national origin.

Know Your Source: Hate in the Debate

The watchdog group Southern Poverty Law Center designated the Federation for American Immigration Reform (FAIR) as a hate group in December 2007. SPLC states that "FAIR (is) the most important organization fueling the backlash against immigration. Founded ... in 1979, FAIR has long been marked by anti-Latino and anti-Catholic attitudes." FAIR started the Center for Immigration Studies (CIS) in 1985.

The Southern Poverty Law Center notes that FAIR:

Is the creation of a man who operates a racist publishing company and has compared immigrants to "bacteria,"

Has employed members of white supremacist groups in key positions,

Has promoted racist conspiracy theories,

Has accepted more than \$1 million from the Pioneer Fund, a racist foundation devoted to eugenics and to proving a connection between race and IQ.

Despite their designation as a hate group, FAIR and CIS are cited often and are used as a resource in the immigration debate.

Resources

Learn more about the human rights of migrants and the facts about immigration, including sources cited in this factsheet at Energy of a Nation:

www.energyofanation.org



- 1 - "The Dangerous Journey." Witness for Peace Newsletter . Oct. 2007: 8.
- 2 - Office of Public Affairs, U.S. Dept. of Homeland Security, U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement, Fact Sheet, Fiscal Year 2008, Dec. 28, 2007. Accessed April, 2008 at: <http://www.ice.gov/doclib/pi/news/factsheets/2008budgetfactsheet.pdf>.
- 3 - "About the U.S. Detention and Deportation System." Detention Watch Network. Accessed April, 2008 at: <http://www.detentionwatchnetwork.org/aboutdetention>.
- 4 - Ibid.
- 5 - "Table 2 - Refugees and Asylum Seekers Worldwide." World Refugee Survey 2007. U.S. Committee for Refugees and Immigrants. Accessed May, 2008 at: http://www.refugees.org/uploadedFiles/Investigate/Publications_&_Archives/WRS_Archives/2007/Table2.pdf.
- 6 - Jefferys, Kelly. "Refugees and Asylees: 2006." Annual Flow Report . May, 2007. Department of Homeland Security. Accessed May, 2008 at: http://www.dhs.gov/xlibrary/assets/statistics/publications/Refugee_AsyleeSec508Compliant.pdf.
- 7 - "Visa Bulletin for January 2008." Num. 114, Vol. VIII. U.S. Department of State. Washington, D.C. Accessed May, 2008 at: http://www.travel.state.gov/visa/frvi/bulletin/bulletin_3897.html.
- 8 - Ray, Brian K. "Building the New American Community Initiative: A Summary." Migration Policy Institute, 2004. Accessed in July, 2006 at http://www.migrationpolicy.org/news/BNAC_EXEC_SUM.pdf.
- 9 - Papademetriou, Demetrios G. "Policy Considerations for Immigrant Integration." Oct. 2003. Immigration Information Source. Accessed July, 2006 at <http://migrationinformation.org/Feature/print.cfm?ID=171>.
- 10 - Ewing, Walter A. and Johnson, Benjamin. "Dollars without Sense: Underestimating the Value of Less-Educated Workers." May 2007. AILF IPC. Accessed April, 2008 at: http://www.aifl.org/ipc/policybrief/policybrief_050807.shtml.
- 11 - "It's Tax Time! Immigrants and Taxes: Contributions to State and Federal Coffers." April, 2008. AILF IPC. Accessed May, 2008 at: <http://www.immigrationpolicy.org/index.php?content=fc080412>.
- 12 - Barker, Valerie and Giles, Howard. "Who Supports the English-Only Movement? Evidence for Misconceptions about Latino Group Vitality." Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development. Vol. 23. No 5. pp. 353-370. Accessed July, 2006 at: <http://www.multilingualmatters.net/jmmd/023/0353/jmmd0230353.pdf>.
- 13 - Waters, Mary C. and Jiménez, Tomás R. "Assessing Immigrant Assimilation: New Empirical and Theoretical Challenges." Annual Review of Sociology. Volume 31: August 2005. P. 105-125. Accessed August, 2006 at: <http://arjournals.annualreviews.org/doi/abs/10.1146/annurev.soc.29.010202>.
- 14 - Crawford, James. "Legislating Language: Anglo-Paranoia in the U.S.A." Accessed July, 2006 at: <http://ourworld.compuserve.com/homepages/JCRAWFORD/worldpap.htm> and Fix, Michael, Papademetriou, Demetrios G. and Cooper, Betsy. "Leaving too much to chance: A roundtable on immigrant integration policy." 2005. Migration Policy Institute. Accessed July, 2006 at: http://www.migrationpolicy.org/pubs/LeavingTooMuch_Report.pdf.
- 15 - Barker, Valerie and Giles, Howard. "Who Supports the English-Only Movement? Evidence for Misconceptions about Latino Group Vitality." Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development. Vol. 23. No 5. pp. 353-370. Accessed July, 2006 at: <http://www.multilingualmatters.net/jmmd/023/0353/jmmd0230353.pdf>.
- 16 - Waslin, Michele. "Why Don't They Just Get in Line? The Real Story of Getting a Green Card and Coming to the U.S. Legally." March, 2008. AILF IPC. Accessed April, 2008 at: <http://www.immigrationpolicy.org/images/File/factcheck/WhyDontTheyGetInLine03-08.pdf>.
- 17 - "Visa Bulletin for May 2008." Num. 118, Vol. VIII. U.S. Department of State, Washington, D.C. Accessed May, 2008 at: http://travel.state.gov/visa/frvi/bulletin/bulletin_4205.html.
- 18 - 8 USC sec. 1151(b)(2)(A)(i).
- 19 - Anderson, Stuart. "The Contribution of Legal Immigration to the Social Security System." February, 2005. Accessed August, 2006 at: <http://www.aila.org/content/default.aspx?docid=12396>.
- 20 - "Region's minority population is growing dramatically." Metropolitan Council Directions Newsletter: Development. 2005. Accessed July, 2006 at: <http://www.metrocouncil.org/Directions/development/dev2005/demographicsSept05.htm>.
- 21 - Proscio, Tony. "Taking It to the Street: How roadway design helped shape a neighborhood's development." April 2005. Accessed July, 2006 at: http://www.c-d-g.org/resources/transportation/guidelines_and_studies/LakeStreet/PLCP-intersection.pdf.
- 22 - Minnesota Planning Critical Issues. "Implications of rural Minnesota's changing demographics." July 2000. Accessed July, 2006 at http://www.mnplan.state.mn.us/pdf/2000/rural_02.pdf.
- 23 - Kielkopf, James J. "Estimating the Economic Impact of the Latino Workforce in South Central Minnesota." Center for Rural Policy and Development. Minnesota State University, Mankato. Accessed July, 2006 at <http://www.mnsu.edu/ruralmn/pages/Publications/reports/latinoworkforce.pdf>.
- 24 - Newman, Nathan. "Eye on Immigration: Real State Solutions." Progressive States Network. Accessed April, 2008 at: <http://www.progressivestates.org/content/114/03062006-stateside-dispatch-eye-on-immigration#2>.
- 25 - "Guide to Immigrant Eligibility for Federal Programs, 4th Edition." National Immigration Law Center. Updated March 2005. Accessed April, 2008 at: http://www.nilc.org/pubs/guideupdates/tbl1_ovrvw_fed_pgms_032505.pdf.
- 26 - Ibid.
- 27 - Levinson, Amanda. "Immigrants and Welfare Use." Migration Policy Institute. August 2002. Accessed February, 2006 at: <http://www.migrationinformation.org/USFocus/display.cfm?ID=45>.
- 28 - Martinez, Ramiro Jr. Coming to America: The Impact of the New Immigrants on Crime, Chapter I. Accessed July, 2006 at: <http://www.nyupress.org/webchapters/0814757049chapt1.pdf>.
- 29 - Rumbaut, Ruben G, et al "Debunking the Myth of Immigrant Criminality: Imprisonment Among First and Second-Generation Young Men" University of CA, Irvine, June 1 2006. Migration Information Source. <http://www.migrationinformation.org/Feature/print.cfm?ID=403>.
- 30 - Martinez, Ramiro Jr. Coming to America: The Impact of the New Immigrants on Crime, Chapter I. Accessed July, 2006 at: <http://www.nyupress.org/webchapters/0814757049chapt1.pdf>.