

The Problem The economy isn't working. Jobs are bleeding out of the country. U.S. corporations are moving production facilities and jobs throughout the planet in an effort to minimize labor costs and maximize profits, respecting no national borders. The American working class now includes the people of Mexico, China, India, and Vietnam - people who are working directly or indirectly for U.S. owned corporations.

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

Many U.S. born workers have been led to blame immigrants for making their jobs insecure. Immigration has become the hot button issue of the early 21st century.

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

There is no denying that the immigration system, in the U.S. is broken. The legal status of immigrant workers must be addressed, with 12 million undocumented people living and working here. Without legal status immigrant workers are victims of every kind of labor abuse and cannot protect their rights without fear of deportation. The continuation of a debased class of workers, whom employers can and do underpay, overwork, and exploit in legal and illegal ways, contributes to a downward push on wages and working conditions for all workers in the United States.

**What is your immigration story?
Why did you or your family members leave their
homeland and come to the United States?
Was it a story of welcome or hardship?**

THE REALITY OF IMMIGRATION AND DEPORTATION

IMMIGRANT WORKERS,

On December 12, 2006, U. S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) agents simultaneously raided six Swift & Company meatpacking plants in five states. Approximately 1,000 ICE agents, some in riot gear, detained 1,282 workers at gun point, many shackled with chains between their legs.

TWO NEW YORK PERSONAL STORIES

On July 6, 2007, I was on an Amtrak train returning to the Bronx, where I have lived for the last 25 years. At the station in Rochester, NY, immigration agents entered the train with dogs. Their entrance brought terror into the train, and they started to question everyone for their identity papers. They took away about 30 people, including myself in handcuffs. The agents were carrying the list of Amtrak passengers and had identified these people in advance. - Victor

and still another tells her story....Hear Patty's words.....

I was 18 years old when my aunt used my cousin's papers to bring me to this country so I could live with my mother. I had never met my mother because she lived in the US.. When I arrived at the US airport, immigration agents detained me and gave me an airplane ticket to return to Ecuador that same day.

Two years later, I entered this country through the Mexican border without inspection. When I arrived in the US, I started to work and help my mother and brother. Later, I met a special person named Jarret. We dated and two years later, he asked me to marry him. We talked a lot about how important family is to us. We married and tried to fix my immigration status. Jarret is a US citizen. We consulted with some lawyers and told them about my problem at the airport. The lawyers told me that it was okay to apply and that it would take at least two or three years to get an appointment with Immigration.

After I applied, I was granted legal permission to work. I applied for a Social Security number and obtained a drivers' license. When the day of my immigration appointment arrived, I reported to Federal Plaza in Manhattan.

Without asking a single question, they told me that I had been re-issued a deportation order. They handcuffed me and transported me to the ninth floor to see a deportation officer. They checked my record and since I did not have any criminal record they agreed that I could go, but that I had to return in two weeks with an airplane ticket to return to Ecuador.

In March, when I reported for my monthly check-in at Federal Plaza, although I have never violated my probation, they put me on an intensive supervision program (ISAP) in which I had to wear an electronically-monitored ankle bracelet and report three times a week. My most recent petition to stop my deportation has been denied. My case is now pending in the courts, and I am waiting to see if they accept my appeal.

"Immigration is supposed to be a civil issue, but now it is seen as a criminal issue. Why? People immigrate to the US for the same reason as 100 years ago. It was okay then, and now it's a crime to migrate. Why?" - Jean Montrevil, one of 424 NYC residents on ISAP - the Intensive Supervision Appearance Program

A record number of people were deported in 2007: 276,912, up 56% from just two years ago. Deportation at the border means you cannot earn daily bread for your family, cannot find rest from the oppression that drove you into flight. Deportation from within the states is compounded by an exile from the family and life you've established here.

This aggressive immigration enforcement has led to unprecedented numbers of immigrant detainees, with a national average of 27,900 in 2007, a 42% increase from the year before. The majority of immigrant detainees (63%) are held at city and county jails, where they are often mixed with criminal offenders and find themselves states away from legal and emotional support. They include torture survivors, asylum seekers, pregnant women, and children. They suffer poor conditions and abuse, while the private prison industry and county jailers reap huge profits.

"Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for by doing that some have entertained angels without knowing it. Remember those who are in prison, as though you were in prison with them; those who are being tortured, as though you yourselves were being tortured."

-Hebrew 13:2-3