

The Immigrant's Journal

Our leaders
who stood for
Unity & Justice



FREE

Protecting God's Children From Distant Lands

June 22-July 06, 2008

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26 Court Street, Suite 701, Brooklyn, NY 11242 Tel: 718-243-9431 Fax: 718-222-3153 Email: immjournal@aol.com

Undocumented Seized on Buses & Trains

Immigrants are being targeted for deportation while riding on Amtrak and Greyhound. These private transport companies are collaborating with immigration authorities to turn rides into a raid on wheels for unsuspecting immigrants.

Immigrant rights activists led by Families for Freedom, recently joined the families who rallied in front of Amtrak and Greyhound headquarters to hold the travel companies accountable for taking their money and not warning them that they may be interrogated, arrested and detained by immigration officials.

Sonia, who immigration officials arrested along with her family while they rode peacefully on an Amtrak train, spoke about the terror of being grilled by immigration officials and separated from

her family. "This is the last thing I expected coming home. They seemed to be approaching all of the Latinos on the train and asking them for papers. One family even had work permits but immigration officials told them that this was not enough and they were detained also. I'm a customer, I paid just like everyone else, but my family and I were treated like we are less than human beings," she said. Sonia's family was detained at the Amtrak station and then transported to an Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) facility where some members were sent home and others imprisoned in the Buffalo Federal Detention Facility.

After being bonded out they experienced the same terror a second time coming home on the Greyhound bus.

"What this says to us is that immigrants—documented or undocumented—can expect to be targeted and inspected every single time they board Amtrak or Greyhound to go anywhere near a U.S. border crossing. That these companies do not warn people they may end up in immigration detention through the simple act of purchasing a ticket is unconscionable," said Maria Muentes of Families for Freedom, a network by and for families facing and fighting deportation.

"I have witnessed a raid on a Greyhound bus and could see that the families detained were scared and unable to communicate with the ICE and Customs and Border Protection (CBP) officials," said Joanne Macri, Director of

continued on page 5

Obama on Immigration



Barack Obama, residential nominee for the Democratic party has said that "immigration will not be used as a football in his administration." In this issue, and every other issue, we shall highlight the Senator's views on the issue of immigration.

Undocumented workers come here to work, not to drive

When I was a state senator in Illinois, I voted to require that illegal aliens get trained, get a license, get insurance to protect public safety. That was my intention. The problem we have here is not driver's licenses. Undocumented workers do not come here to drive. They're here to work. Instead of being distracting by what has now become a wedge issue, let's focus on actually solving the problem that this administration, the Bush administration, had done nothing about it.

Source: 2007 Democratic debate in Las Vegas, Nevada Nov 15, 2007

continued on page 6

Free Legal Consultations

The Immigrant's Journal Legal & Educational Fund, Inc in partnership with its legal advisor, Brian Figeroux of the Law Firm of Figeroux & Associates offers free consultations on any legal matter during the 2-hour radio program, ICE (Immigration & Cultural Expose). ICE is aired on WPAT 930 AM and www.allblackradio.com Saturdays from 6pm-8pm.

The consultations can be on any legal matter such as:

- immigration
- matrimonial (divorce)
- real estate
- bankruptcy
- foreclosures
- personal injury
- criminal and civil
- wills and estate planning

In addition to the free consultations, listeners can enjoy news, views, interviews as well as music by popular DJ Lonnie B. So, make it a date. Tune in every Saturday from 6pm-8pm on WPAT 930 or watch and listen on the internet at www.allblackradio.com.

Remember to tell a friend, another friend and another friend. Don't keep it a secret. ♦

Inside: Get A Green Card ... see page 5

The Caribbean & Latin America feels the pinch in less remittances ... see page 7

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EDITORIAL & NEWSBRIEFS

Celebrating 10 years of serving the Immigrant Community

The Immigrant's Journal Legal & Educational Fund, Inc. (IMJLEF) is a not-for-profit organization, founded in 1998, dedicated to the diverse immigrant groups that constitute the fabric of New York. Our purpose is to educate and empower the immigrant communities through the development and coordination of various plans of action on important issues that are crucial to their growth. In summary, our goals are:

- To educate the members of the community about the contributions that immigrants have made to the United States, economically and historically.
- To inform members of the immigrant community about the changes in immigration law, the educational system, health issues, voting rights, financial opportunities, home purchasing and other basic information.
- To legally assist and direct members of the community facing immigration and other legal problems.

For many years, new immigrants to the United States have been misinformed, embezzled and denied opportunities. This existed as a result of the lack of credible publications and organizations geared towards new immigrants. Hence, *The Immigrant's Journal* was launched to fill that void. Today, *The Immigrant's Journal* is published in English, Spanish and French. The Journal provides up-to-date information on laws and regulations affecting the immigrant communities, as well as news and human interest stories. In March 2005, the first Annual Think Tank Conference: Protecting Immigrants was held at the Brooklyn Museum, where the Immigrant's Journal Legal & Educational Fund, Inc Membership Program was launched. The event was a success and the Membership Program currently boasts over 3000 members.

Deportation Inoculation: One of the programs that the Journal is especially proud of is its free citizenship drive. For many years, the IMJLEF has been offering free citizenship assistance to members of the public. We call it "**deportation inoculation**" because when one becomes a US citizen it is protection from deportation. Additionally, it is also protection for your children. When a parent becomes a citizen, all children under the age of 18 gets derivative citizenship. Everybody makes mistakes in life at some time or another. You don't want one little mistake to become a life of sorrow.

This service is provided every Saturday from 10am to 3pm at 26 Court Street (downtown Brooklyn) and Tuesdays and Thursdays from 3pm to 7pm at 1105 Nostrand Avenue. The free citizenship application assistance is available only to individuals who have never been arrested. Individuals who have been arrested must have a paid consultation with the attorney. This is necessary as certain offences are deportable.

We need your help

In addition to this great citizenship drive, the Immigrant's Journal Legal & Educational Fund, Inc in partnership with Figeroux & Associates offer free legal consultations every Saturday on its ICE Radio program.

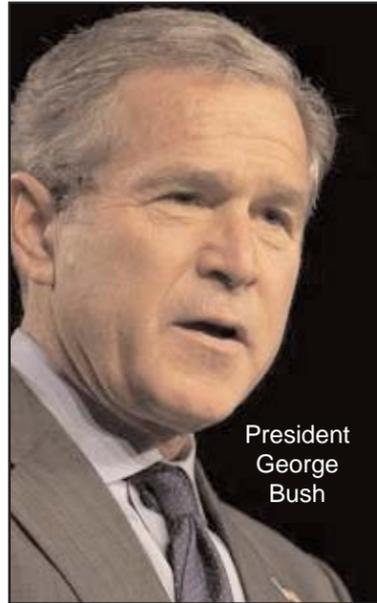
The Immigrant's Journal reflects on the past ten years and looks forward to ten more years of service to the immigrant community. All services provided by the IMJLEF are funded through the generous support of the Law Firm of Figeroux & Associates and its membership program.

In effort to continue this community service, we are inviting members of the public to make a donation. Donations are tax deductible and any amounts are welcomed. For more information on making a donation, please call 718-243-9431. ♦

Bush administration steps up immigration raids

Without regard to any political fallout during the presidential campaign, the Bush administration is vowing to carry out its unprecedented crackdown on undocumented immigrants for the remainder of 2008. Over 3,500 illegal immigrants have been arrested in dozens of business sweeps, far ahead of the previous year's pace.

Julie Myers, who heads the immigration agency, said ICE (Immigration and Customs Enforcement) will press dramatic enforcement operation until the Bush administration leaves office January 20, 2009. "We will



President George Bush

continue enforcement of the law," she said. "What we try to do is try to stay out of the (election-year) rhetoric and do our job and do it well."

In a twist of fate, there are indications that these worksite raids, mounting deportations and SWAT-team-style arrests of immigrants, while pleasing to conservative voters, may alienate some Latino voters, potentially driving them toward Democratic presidential nominee Barack Obama. ♦

ERROR! Electronic Employment Verifications Systems

Many on Capitol Hill are eyeing favorably bills that create a massive electronic employment database. While proponents of the Shuler-Tancredino "SAVE Act" (HR 4088) and the Johnson "New Employee Verification Act of 2008" (HR 5515) talk tough about cracking down on illegal immigrants, the truth is, their bills' nationwide mandatory electronic employment verification system require all American workers, foreign- and native-born alike, to seek the government's permission to work. If the government database isn't accurate, Americans will be denied employment and paychecks, at least temporarily, while they attempt to resolve the problem with the government agencies.

The proposed bills build upon the E-Verify program, a small pilot program that taps Social Security Administration (SSA) and Department of Homeland Security (DHS) databases to make determinations about employment authorization. Here is what we know about the databases and what we can expect if these bills are passed:

Errors in the database that E-Verify checks to determine work authorization status impact millions.

4.1%: error rate in the SSA database

17.8 million: number of discrepancies in the SSA database

12.7 million: number of database discrepancies pertaining to native-born U.S. citizens

1 in 25: number of new hires that would receive a tentative nonconfirmation based on error rates

55 million: approximate number of new

hires per year in the U.S.

11,000: number of workers per day who would be flagged as ineligible for employment if E-Verify were mandatory for all employers

25: workers per work day per congressional district who would be flagged as ineligible for employment if the Shuler or Johnson bill passed, making E-Verify mandatory for all employers

If the Shuler or Johnson bills are passed, E-Verify would have to be expanded exponentially in a short time period.

55,000: the number of employers currently enrolled in E-Verify

7 million: the approximate number of employers in the U.S.

13,000%: approximate increase from number of current users

6,500: approximate number of employers per day (including weekends and holidays) that would have to enroll in E-Verify to meet the Johnson bill requirement of enrollment of all employers within 3 years. 4,800 per day to meet the Shuler bill 4-year requirements.

50-60 million: number of queries per year E-Verify would have to respond to if the Johnson or Shuler bill were enacted

3.6 million: number of queries E-Verify received in 2007. ♦

Source: Immigration Policy Center



FRADULENT MARRIAGE OR NOT?

If you are scheduled for a Stokes interview (a second interview), **HIRE AN ATTORNEY.**

If you fail a Stokes interview, immigration authorities are likely to commence deportation proceedings against you. Call 718-834-0190 to schedule an appointment NOW!

COMMUNITY WORK

CM First Step Training: A Minority Owned, Community Business

CM First Step Training Center Inc first opened first its doors in 2001. Although under new management the philosophy of the school remains the same. It embodies a quote from Frederick Douglas: "We must lift as we climb, each one teach one."

According to Director Clerisa McKenzie, the school is more than a business opportunity. It started to meet a need in the community, especially in the neighborhood of Bedford Stuyvesant. She said: "We feel that educational opportunities should be available in an atmosphere of free inquiry and intellectual stimulation to all qualified applicants of diverse ages and backgrounds. As a community of people, we should join together with a deep desire and strong determination to grow in knowledge and maturity."

"The school offers more than an education for students. It also serves as guidance and a counselling resource of sorts for members of the community. Indeed, the completion of a program of instruction as a Nurse's Aide is the first step in the process of life learning in the health care continuum," she added.

Clearly, the goal of CM First Step

Training Center is not only to teach, but to counsel and assist individuals in acquiring self-confidence in order to reach their full potential. That's why free legal and career consultations are offered to all students. Plus, students are directed to agencies which will help them secure job placements.

In today's hospitals and extended care facilities a nurse assistant is an important part of a healthcare team that includes many personnel outside of nurses. Nurse assistants are needed to provide routine care so that nurses can provide care that only they can perform.

The nurse assistant must not only be very skilled in the actual procedures being performed but must also be able to observe a patient's condition and report that information back to the nurse.

Due to other responsibilities, the nurse cannot spend large amounts of time in the room with the patient so the nurse assistant is often referred to as the nurse's "eyes and ears".



This is a very important career and the certified nursing assistant course offered by CM First Step Training is really laying a foundation for career that's both personally and financially rewarding and offers job security.

Students can learn in a comfortable environment. Classrooms have central air conditioning and heating. There is a

24-hour private security force and modern elevator service. Class sizes are small enough to encourage individual attention, and teachers use up-to-date teaching methods and equipment to encourage student participation, motivation and curiosity.

Going a step further, CM First Step Training has partnered with the Law Firm of Figeroux & Associates to offer free tax and legal consultations to the businesses in the Restoration Plaza/Bedford Stuyvesant area. Brian Figeroux, Legal advisor for CM First Step Training believes in giving back to the community.

He said: "At Figeroux & Associates, we believe in giving back to the community which supports us. That's why we offer pro bono consultations on tax and business issues to the business community. At a minimum, there is the free consultation and extended recommendations depending on the client's economic situation."

For more information on the certified nursing assistant program or to schedule an appointment for a free consultation, please call 718-789-7122/718-622-1800.

CM First Step Training Center Inc: step up to a brighter future! ♦

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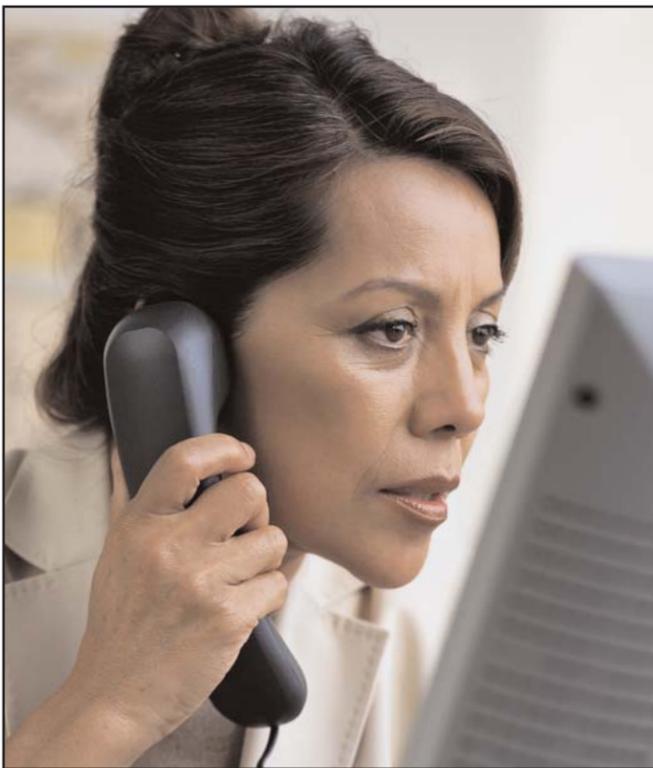
LEGISLATION

No Match is No Solution

WASHINGTON, DC: The Department of Homeland Security announced a "supplemental proposed rule" concerning the actions required of employers who receive "no-match" letters from the Social Security Administration. Rather than making changes in the substance of the previous rule, which was enjoined by a Federal District Court, DHS reiterates its same old arguments. The rule's bottom line remains unchanged: employers may believe they have no choice but to fire any employee who cannot resolve within 90 days a social security records discrepancy.

"The Social Security Administration is charged with administering social security benefits, and is not structured or oriented to be an immigration enforcement tool. This misguided attempt to fit the square peg of immigration enforcement into the round hole of social security benefits is a guarantee of increased discrimination and erroneous terminations," stated Kathleen Campbell Walker, President of the American Immigration Lawyers Association.

One predictable result of implementation of this rule will be unwarranted firings due to database errors and pre-



Administration should suspend the "no-match" effort until the database achieves acceptable levels of accuracy and until employers and employees have efficient mechanisms to correct data errors and to obtain status confirmation.

"This unchanged regulation clearly leaves employers holding the bag as to Congress' failures to create legal avenues to fill legitimate labor needs," said Campbell Walker. "Employers will be left with a Hobson's choice — keep the employee while potentially being exposed to employment verification penalties or terminate the employee and face possible wrongful termination or discrimination charges. Where are the rational and predictable legal protections for employers trying to do the right thing?" ♦

dictable delays in obtaining documentation of status or database corrections. The SSA has emphatically and consistently stated that there are many reasons for a no-match record to be generated other than a lack of work authorization. Some of these reasons include: spelling errors, incomplete names, inversion of date order, valid name changes pursuant to divorce or marriage, as well as cultural differences in name order. The

AILA InfoNet Doc. No. 08032140. The American Immigration Lawyers Association is the national association of immigration lawyers established to promote justice, advocate for fair and reasonable immigration law and policy, advance the quality of immigration and nationality law and practice, and enhance the professional development of its members.

AILA Condemns ICE's Failure to provide Basic Medical Care

WASHINGTON, DC: AILA applauds the introduction of the Detainee Basic Medical Care Act of 2008 by Representative Zoe Lofgren (D-CA) in the House and Senators Robert Menendez (D-NJ), Edward M. Kennedy (D-MA), Richard Durbin (D-IL), Daniel Akaka (D-HI) and Joseph Lieberman (I-CT) in the Senate.

This bill takes an important step in addressing Immigration and Customs Enforcement's (ICE) outrageous failure to provide medical treatment in detention facilities which has resulted in serious harm to detainees and in some cases, even death. Since 2003, at least 83 detainees have died in detention in custody or shortly after release. The Department of Homeland Security's (DHS) current process for providing outside medical care requires that on-site medical personnel in detention centers across the country obtain prior authorization from officials in Washington, resulting in both unreasonable delays and denials in some cases. This bill would require DHS to issue guidelines requiring the timely and effective delivery of health care to detainees.

Explosive growth in the numbers of non-citizens in immigration detention has resulted in inconsistent and often poor conditions of confinement. Although federal immigration

Since 2003, at least 83 detainees have died in detention in custody or shortly after release. AILA urges Congress and the Administration to undertake a broader re-examination of our current detention policies. ICE's detention system and their treatment of detainees should comport with basic American values of decency and fairness.

authorities adopted generalized detention standards in 2000, these standards have not been consistently followed or enforced. Despite DHS's monitoring of conditions, widespread reports of abuse persist. Recent reports by the DHS Office of Inspector General (OIG) and the Government Accountability Office (GAO) highlighted the Department's lack of compliance with current health care standards and the obstacles that detention facility personnel and detainees have encountered in obtaining approval for outside medical and mental health care. AILA encourages DHS to work collaboratively with Congress to issue regulations that will ensure detainees are treated humanely in all respects including the provision of medical care.

While this bill is an important first step toward ensuring that detainees receive appropriate medical care, AILA urges Congress and the Administration to undertake a broader re-examination of our current detention

policies. The detention of individuals is an extraordinary power that should only be used in extraordinary circumstances. Current law requires ICE to put immigrants in jail even when they pose no danger to the community or flight risk. AILA supports reforms that would require the Attorney General to release an immigrant from detention if he or she does not pose a danger to the safety of other persons or of property and is likely to appear for any scheduled proceeding. To ensure that detention is not used to separate American families needlessly, AILA urges DHS to expand cost-saving community-based alternatives to detention programs that require immigrants to show up for their court proceedings. Most importantly, the Department's detention system and their treatment of detainees should comport with basic American values of decency and fairness. ♦

Source: AILA InfoNet Doc. No. 08051562

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The Immigrant's Journal Legal & Educational Fund, Inc. is an organization dedicated to the educational and economic empowerment of all immigrants and immigrant organizations here in the United States. We at the Journal recognize the enormous contribution of immigrants to this country economically, socially and politically. Since September 11, 2001, however, immigrants have increasingly been discriminated against and Congress has passed legislation curtailing the rights of immigrants here in the U.S., broadly claiming that immigrants are a threat to "National Security." We at the Journal believe that these charges are unfounded, unsubstantiated and exaggerated.

The Immigrant's Journal Volunteer Intern Program: was introduced to give our volunteers the opportunity to work in an immigrant friendly environment while developing the necessary skills for college or law school. They assist our staff in resolving immigration and other legal concerns through personal interviews, radio, email and telephone contact. They also assist the public with citizenship applications and in researching whether or not children of naturalized US citizens have derived citizenship from their parents. Some of our volunteers assist our legal staff by engaging in legal research and writing letters on other legal issues. Volunteer interns are also assigned various other jobs in our Youth Programs.

Hours are flexible. Email your cover letter and resume or any questions to immjournal@aol.com

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VISA BULLETIN

The visa bulletin summarizes the availability of immigrant numbers for each month based on family-sponsored and employment preferences, as well as the diversity immigrant category. To access the visa bulletin, go to www.theimmigrantsjournal.com

HOW TO GET A GREEN CARD

Get A Green Card...

How Do I...Help My Fiancé(e)
Become a Permanent Resident of the US?

A United States (U.S.) citizen who decides to marry a person who is not a citizen or permanent resident can take different paths to help their fiancé(e) get permanent residence.

One option is to marry overseas. If you marry overseas, you can then file a Form I-130, Petition for Alien Relative, for your new husband or wife.

Another option is if your fiancé(e) is already in the U.S. in another lawful temporary status and you want to get married in the U.S.

One other option is the fiancé(e) visa if your fiancé(e) is overseas and you want to get married in the U.S., or he/she is in the U.S. and wants to depart the U.S. and return to get married.

What are the basic eligibility requirements for a fiancé(e) petition?

Only a U.S. citizen can file a fiancé(e) petition. In your petition you must prove that:



- You are a U.S. citizen; and
- You and your fiancé(e) intend to marry within 90 days of your fiancé(e) entering the U.S.; and
- You are both free to marry; and
- You have met each other in person within two years before you file this petition unless:
 1. The requirement to meet your

fiancé(e) in person would violate strict and long-established customs of you or your fiancé(e)'s foreign culture or social practice; or

2. You prove that the requirement to personally meet your fiancé(e) would result in extreme hardship to you. ♦

Source: uscis.gov

Editor's note: The information here is solely for this purpose. Please consult with an attorney before making decisions or taking actions.

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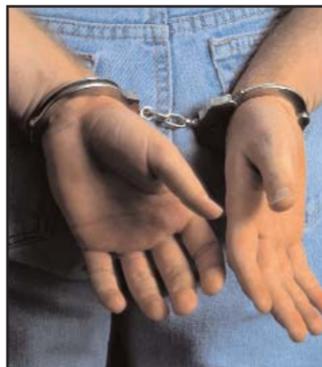
Deportation Trap

Association Immigrant Defense Project. "We all sat stunned as they took families with children off of the bus. Passengers are not expecting a raid on a routine bus or train ride. I could see they did not know it was their legal right to ask for an attorney or refuse to proceed with the interrogation," Macri continued.

This shocking trend is part of the Department of Homeland Security's efforts to deputize everyone in the community to help them enforce immigration law.

"They claim that they are simply stepping up border inspections but essentially they are bringing the border to you. It's easy pickings for them to target unsuspecting people on these busses and trains but a nightmare for New York City families who will face deportation as a result of having taken that train or bus ride," demanded Juan Carlos Ruiz, Director of New York New Sanctuary Movement.

Families for Freedom and the Immigrant's Journal Legal & Educational Fund Inc, wants to warn



Don't let this be you, your family or a loved one.

immigrants that when stopped by immigration officials it is your right:

■ To ask for an attorney. You can say, "I cannot answer your questions without my attorney present."

■ To not sign anything.

■ Don't lie.

■ Do not be combative, be polite and clear. You don't want to give them an excuse to assault you physically.

■ Make sure someone in your family knows

where you are going and has all your information so they can find you if you are detained.

■ Expect to be investigated by immigration officials each and every time you ride Amtrak or Greyhound or anytime you drive near the border. ♦

Editor's note: For more information, contact Maria Muentes, 646-483-1333 at Families for Freedom. Also listen to www.allblackradio.com and WPAT 930 AM every Saturday from 6pm-8pm for the latest immigration news and updates as well as free legal consultations off the air.

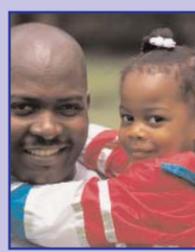
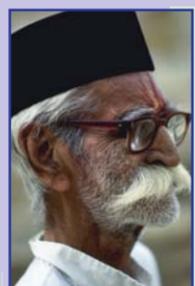
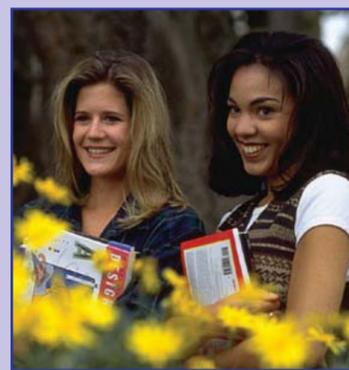
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- ▶ Family Sponsored Permanent Residence
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ELECTION 2008

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Obama on Immigration

Solve the driver's license issue with immigration reform

On the driver's license issue, I don't believe that we're going to have to deal with this if we have comprehensive immigration reform, because people don't come here to drive. They come here to work. If we have registered them, if they have paid a fine, if they are learning English and going to the back of the line, if we fix our legal immigration system, then we will not have this problem of undocumented workers in this country, because people will be able to actually go on a pathway to citizenship.

Source: 2008 Democratic debate in Los Angeles before Super Tuesday Jan 31, 2008

Immigration raids are ineffective

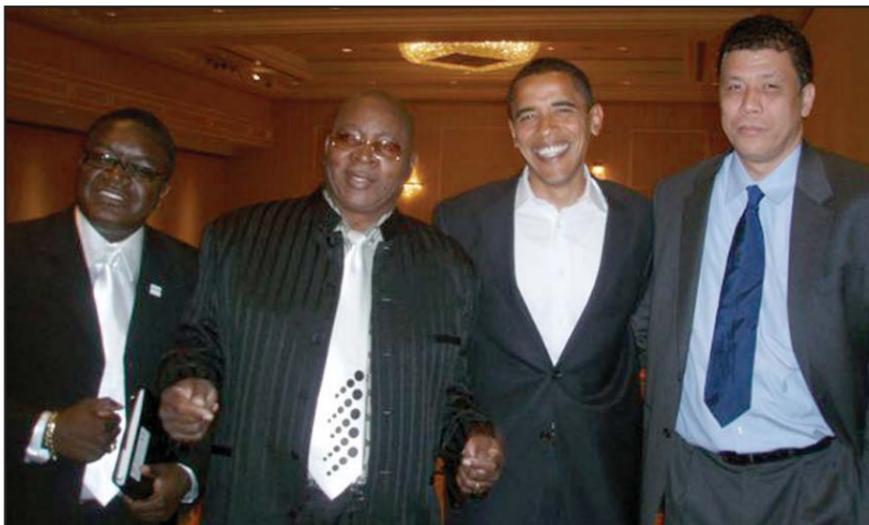
THE PROBLEM

Immigration Bureaucracy is Broken: The immigration bureaucracy is broken and overwhelmed, forcing legal immigrants to wait years for applications.

Immigration Raids are Ineffective: Despite a sevenfold increase in recent years, immigration raids only netted 3,600 arrests in 2006 and have placed all the burdens of a broken system onto immigrant families.

OBAMA'S PLAN

Improve Our Immigration System: We must fix the dysfunctional immigration bureaucra-



Barack Obama with community leaders, left, Gerry Hopkins and far right, Brian Figeroux, at an exclusive meeting where the Mighty Sparrow (second left) presented a cd with a song written especially for the charismatic Senator.

cy and increase the number of legal immigrants to keep families together and meet the demand for jobs that employers cannot fill.

Bring People Out of the Shadows: Allow undocumented immigrants who are in good standing to pay a fine, learn English, and go to the back of the line for the opportunity to become citizens.

Work with Mexico: We need to do more to promote economic development in Mexico to decrease illegal immigration.

Source: Campaign booklet, "Blueprint for Change", p. 38-39 Feb 2, 2008

Immigrants are scapegoats for high unemployment rates

Q: How do you address high unemployment & declining wages in the African-American community related to the flood of immigrant labor?

A: Before the latest round of immigrants showed up, you had huge unemployment rates among African-American youth. So to suggest somehow that the problem that we're seeing in inner-city unemployment, for example, is attributable to immigrants is a case of scapegoating that I do not believe in, I do not subscribe to. There is no doubt that we have to get control of our borders. We can't have hundreds of thousands of people coming over to the US without us having any idea who they are. We have to crack down on those employers that are taking advantage of the situation, hiring folks who cannot complain about worker conditions, who aren't getting the minimum wage sometimes, or

aren't getting overtime. There are a whole host of reasons why we have not been generating the kinds of jobs that we are generating. We should not use immigration as a tactic to divide.

Source: 2008 Democratic debate in Los Angeles before Super Tuesday Jan 31, 2008

Deporting 12 million people is ridiculous and impractical

The American people want fairness, want justice. They recognize that the idea that you're going to deport 12 million people is ridiculous, that we're not going to be devoting all our law enforcement resources to sending people back. But what they do also want is some order to the process. We're not going to be able to do these things in isolation. We're not going to be able to deal with the 12 million people who are living in the shadows and give them a way of getting out of the shadows if we don't also deal with the problem of this constant influx of undocumented workers. That's why comprehensive reform is so important. Something that we can do immediately that is very important is to pass the Dream Act, which allows children who through no fault of their own are here but have essentially grown up as Americans, allow them the opportunity for higher education. I do not want two classes of citizens in this country. I want everybody to prosper. That's going to be a top priority. ♦

Source: 2008 Democratic debate at University of Texas in Austin Feb 21, 2008

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IMMIGRANT CONCERNS

Remittances to Latin America and the Caribbean slower, IDB fund

Latin American and Caribbean migrants sent some US\$66.5 billion back to their homelands in 2007, about 7 percent more than in the previous year, according to estimates presented today by the Inter-American Development Bank's Multilateral Investment Fund (MIF).

"This is the first time since we started tracking remittances in the year 2000 that we haven't seen a double-digit increase," said MIF Manager Donald F. Terry. "This is mostly because the region's two top recipients of workers remittances, Mexico and Brazil, departed significantly from past trends."

Remittances to Mexico were virtually unchanged in 2007, rising barely 1 percent to US\$24 billion. Money transfers to Brazil dropped 4 percent to about US\$ 7.1 billion last year.

Terry attributed the slowdown in remittances to these two countries to different causes. In Mexico's case, its migrants appear to be less inclined to send money home, citing concerns about stricter enforcement of immigration laws and a slowing economy in the United States.

In Brazil's case, increasing economic opportunities at home and a strengthening local currency (the real has appreciated 24 percent against the dollar over the



Migrant workers sent some US\$66.5 billion to the region in 2007, MIF estimates. Most of the money sent by migrants goes to pay for basic expenses such as food, shelter, clothing and medicines.

past 12 months) have reduced the appeal of sending money home for many Brazilian immigrants in the United States.

In contrast, remittances to countries in the Central American isthmus increased 11 percent to US\$12.4 billion last year.

Money transfers to countries in the Andean region rose 5 percent to US\$11.6 billion.

Remittances have become a crucial source of income for many developing countries. In Guyana, these flows represent 43 percent of the gross national

product; in Haiti 35 percent, in Honduras 25 percent, and Jamaica and El Salvador 18 percent.

Regarding the recently reported drop in remittances to Mexico (a 6 percent decrease in January 2008 against the same month last year) Terry said that he could not predict whether this decline would continue or even spread to other countries, particularly in Central America.

"We still don't know for certain whether this is a short-term change or the beginning of a new direction," he added. "But if it were to become a trend, it will push millions into poverty."

Most of the money sent by migrants goes to pay for basic expenses such as food, shelter, clothing and medicines. About three-quarters of the remittance flows to Latin America and the Caribbean come from the United States. Spain and Japan are other major sources.

The MIF, an autonomous fund administered by the IDB, originally started to research remittances to analyze their volume and their impact in Latin America and the Caribbean. The fund has promoted competition among service providers, who have considerably cut fees for money transfers to the region over the past few years. ♦

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