

The Immigrant Rights Movement: Between Political Realism and Social Idealism

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MILLIONS OF IMMIGRANTS took to the streets between March and May of 2006 in Los Angeles, New York, Chicago and dozens of other U.S. cities in the largest social and political demonstrations in American history. As the immigrants left work or school to join the marches, in some areas the protests, dominated by Latino workers, had the effect of a general strike, shutting down local businesses and blocking traffic in the centers of major cities. Many carried signs reading, "We are workers, not criminals" and "No Human Being is Illegal." The massive demonstrations were disciplined and peaceful protests intended to pressure Congress to pass a new immigration law that would give millions of undocumented immigrants the right to live and work in the United States with a path to citizenship should they so desire. Yet a year and a half later the demonstrations have subsided, the movement is divided, and Congress debates liberal and conservative immigration reform laws neither of which may be passed. What happened to the immigrant movement? What does the future hold for immigrant workers and their rights? How will the immigrant workers movement affect the labor movement and progressive politics in the U.S. in the coming years? Before turning to the millions and the movement, to politics and programs, let's consider one immigrant's experience.

One Immigrant: Samuel

SAMUEL, WHO DARES NOT USE HIS LAST NAME, spoke to a Methodist church group in Cincinnati recently. Unable to find a job in Guatemala, he crossed the border illegally and alone as a boy of sixteen and came to look for work in the United States. He didn't mention to the Methodists the corrupt and violent Mexican police, the chicanery of the coyotes, the robberies, beatings or sexual abuse that many immigrants experience, or the dangers of the walk through the desert. Always modest and understated he simply paused for a moment, raised his eyebrows and smiled and said, "It was dangerous." After a month or so he found work in a town in Indiana. There Samuel slaughtered and butchered turkeys twelve hours a day, six days a week for the minimum wage though he was never paid overtime, never had a day off or a vacation. The work was hard, heavy, dangerous, and disgusting. He worked alongside U.S.-born workers who did lighter work, were paid more, and treated better. When industrial accidents happened, the company took American workers to the doctor while it took injured immigrant workers to the gate and sent them on their way.

So it has gone for Samuel for several years, one job like that after another; now he works two jobs at once, scrimping, saving and planning. Handsome, always neatly dressed, able to speak his native Mam (a Mayan language), fluent Spanish and rather good English, Samuel is an Evangelical Christian, a Pentecostal. He tells the Methodists, "I work hard and I pray to God that one day I will have my own business."

When time permits Samuel participates in the Guatemalan immigrant association and in the Coalition for Immigrant Rights and Dignity in Cincinnati, joining with other immigrants to demand the right to live and work legally in the United States. He has marched with other immigrants in demonstrations for immigration reform and on the Fourth of July proudly carried the American flag at the head of an immigrant group that marched for the first time in the Northside community parade. Some of Samuel's Guatemalan friends have become active in the SEIU campaign to organize and win contracts for the janitors. Others have worked with UNITE-HERE at a local food processing plants. Some of the building trades unions too have come to see that they have to organize

immigrant workers. But most immigrants work in non-union workplaces, often in circumstances that violate the wages-and-hours laws and at a pace that white, black or Puerto Rican workers who are citizens will not tolerate.

Undocumented immigrants work harder than anyone else, desperate to hold on to their jobs, pay off their debts, send money home to their families, and save for the car, home, marriage or business that is their dream. The Latino immigrants often call the other workers lazy, while American workers sometimes see the immigrants as rate-busters. Employers encourage the competition, note the difference and often fire the American workers, particularly blacks, and hire more undocumented Latinos. Unions would make a big difference, create unity, establish justice in the workplace, but many undocumented immigrants are afraid to join. Often the unions, even with the best of intentions, find it hard to reach and involve the immigrant.

In the last couple of years, things have gotten more difficult for Samuel and other immigrants in Southwest Ohio. Sheriff Richard Jones of Butler County put up billboards calling upon the citizens of the county to report "illegal aliens" and he has put up large yellow signs in front of the jail saying "Illegal Aliens Here." One can go on line and send a message to the Sheriff to turn in one's immigrant neighbors. Recently Jones applied to U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) for authority for his department's deputies to enforce federal immigration law. The thousands of Latino immigrants who live in the many apartment complexes or work in the factories and warehouses in the area live in fear. When ICE conducts a raid at some factory or construction site in the region, or some police officer or sheriff's deputy appears at a workplace or in a neighborhood, then panic takes over. Workers don't show up for their shift, they avoid the Latino shops and restaurants, the family doesn't go to church, and children are pulled out of school. Like others who have no drivers' licenses and cannot get insurance, Samuel drives cautiously to and from work in Butler County, praying that he get there without incident.

Samuel's story, of course, is not unique. The Cincinnati metropolitan area, that is, from Florence, Kentucky to Hamilton, Ohio, has about 60,000 Latino immigrants, most of whom have been here less than five years. Nor are they alone in their immigrant experience. A recent meeting to celebrate Senegalese Independence Day was also used to organize the Francophone African community to defend their rights as immigrants. Cincinnati has 20,000 sub-Saharan African immigrants, most of them Muslim and French speaking, though they often pass below the radar since they are taken for African Americans. There are also thousands of Arab immigrants in Cincinnati from a dozen nations, various ethnic groups and different religions. East Asian and South Asian immigrants are found in smaller numbers, but they are here in Cincinnati too and growing. And this is in Southwest, Ohio, on the border between the Midwest and the South, far from the ports of entry and the great cosmopolitan cities of the coasts.

The Immigrants

SAMUEL IS NOT A TYPICAL IMMIGRANT because there are no typical immigrants. American immigrants are diverse millions whose only unifying characteristics may be that they are immigrants and most are working people.¹ Almost 12 percent of the U.S. population today is made up of the foreign-born, over 33.5 million people. Over half come from Latin America, a quarter from Asia, and most of the rest from Europe, with others from the rest of the world.² We have more immigrants in our country today than at any time since 1910, the high tide of the great European immigration that began in the 1880s.³ Who are all of the immigrants and on what basis do they come here? The United States, with a population of 300 million people in October 2006, accepts over one million legal immigrants every year, with the nations of Mexico, China, India Philippines and Cuba providing 37 percent.⁴ However, in addition, an estimated 500,000 immigrants also enter the United States

illegally each year, most coming from Latin America.⁵

The United States today has over 10 million undocumented immigrants, though nobody knows for sure how many. Over half, actually closer to 60 percent, come from Mexico, while almost quarter come from Latin American countries. About 10 percent come from Asia.⁶ The rapidly growing immigrant population has contributed to a shift in the ethnic make-up of the country; including our native-born African American population, minorities now make up one-third of the U.S. population.⁷ A language other than English is spoken at home in 50 million families, that is, among one-fifth of the population age 5 or over.⁸ The United States has the fastest growing population in the industrialized world at a rate of one percent a year, and half of the new growth is Hispanic.⁹ Twenty or thirty years ago Latino immigration was regional: Mexican immigrants were concentrated in the Southwest (California, New Mexico, Arizona and Texas), Puerto Ricans in New York, and Cubans in Miami. Today Latino immigrants, above all immigrants from Mexico have spread throughout the United States, with large numbers in cities like Washington, D.C. and Atlanta, Georgia. Latino immigrants can now be found throughout Midwest, the South, and up into New England. Once considered a regional issue confined to the coasts and the southern border, immigration has become a national issue.¹⁰

Latino Immigration

LATIN AMERICAN IMMIGRATION TO THE U.S., representing the greatest number of immigrants from any world region, has been driven by the great economic and political developments of the continent, above all the expanding power of American capitalism and U.S. military might. Mexico sends by far the most migrants to the United States and the two countries have a long and complicated immigration history. The first Mexicans in the United States were not immigrants — they were a conquered people. The United States brought 100,000 Mexicans into the United States by force with the absorption of half of that nation's territory at the end of the U.S.-Mexico War of 1847. Conquest and forced incorporation were in many cases followed by Mexicans being dispossessed of their land and rights, leading to their retreat into segregated communities.¹¹ As the Chicano movement said in the 1960s, "We didn't cross the line — the line crossed us." Since then, Mexican workers have been pumped into the country and occasionally pumped out depending on needs of the U.S. economy and the American military.

The patterns of Mexican mass migration were laid down in two great waves during the period of the Mexican Revolution (1910-1920) and the Cristero Rebellion (1926-1934) during each of which about one million Mexicans moved to the United States.¹² During the Great Depression (1929-1939) some 500,000 Mexicans, competitors for jobs and relief, were driven out of the country by state and local government agencies and American citizens.¹³ Then in the *bracero* era (1942-64), the U.S. wartime economy needed labor and some 4.2 million Mexican guest workers were brought to labor in the United States, accompanied by a parallel illegal immigration that also numbered into the millions.¹⁴ The United States' response to the illegal immigration of the 1940s and 50s was Operation Wetback, a policing operation that in 1953 and 1954, at the height of the McCarthy anti-Communist hysteria, deported almost two million undocumented Mexicans from the United States.¹⁵

More recently, the weak Mexican economy has been the principal generator of mass immigration to the United States. Mexico entered into an economic crisis with the fall of oil prices in the early 1980s. The crisis led the ruling Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI) to adopt the open market and free trade policies pushed by the U.S., the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank. Mexico joined the GATT (the future World Trade Organization) in 1986 and negotiated the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) which went into effect in 1994. That same year Mexico joined the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) as a symbol of its first

world status. Mexico's leap into the global economy ended in a stumble. The dismantling of the old nationalist economy, NAFTA, and an economic depression in 1994-96, had a devastating impact on the Mexican economy. Small business and farms failed and farmers and workers headed north to the United States in search of jobs. During the 1990s to 2000s, Mexico had to create one million jobs each year to accommodate its expanding population, but it often created only between 200,000 and 400,000.

Those without work crossed the border, usually without documents, to spread throughout the United States taking jobs on farms, in factories, and in construction, restaurants and hotels. More recent immigration from other Latin American countries has been driven over the last several decades by the political, military, and economic policies of the United States in Latin America. The United States supported repressive military dictatorships in the Southern cone between 1964 and 1985 leading to waves of political refugees and exiles. The U.S.'s wars against nationalist and leftist movements and governments in Central America in the 1980s set millions of migrants in motion. Then in the 1990s the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) between Canada, Mexico and the United States, had a devastating impact on the Mexican economy, ruining poor farmers who also migrated to seek work in the United States. More generally, the Washington Consensus, the regime of neoliberal globalization imposed on Latin America by the United States, the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank resulted in a more or less continual crisis of their economies causing high unemployment and persistent poverty which has driven more and more farmers and workers to seek work in the United States.¹⁶

Immigrant Workers

IMMIGRANTS HAVE BECOME A VITALLY IMPORTANT PART of the U.S. working class. Half of all new workers in the 1990s were immigrants. The new immigrants are concentrated in low wage occupations where they make up a large percentage of all workers in some industries. Out of the approximately 11.1 million undocumented immigrants, 7.2 were employed in March of 2005, making up 4.9 percent of the entire workforce. But all immigrants, legal and undocumented, make up 14 percent of the work force and as much as 20 percent of workers in low-wage industries. Immigrants account for 17 percent of cleaning workers, 14 percent of construction workers, and 12 percent of food preparation workers. Immigrant workers work for lower wages, have fewer benefits, and often work in substandard conditions.¹⁷ The greatest concentration of immigrant farm workers is as wage earners in crop agriculture. DOL estimates that there are 1.8 million hired crop farm workers in the United States. Of those, 75 percent come from Mexico, 2 percent from Central America, and 1 percent from other countries. Some 53 percent of these hired crop farm workers were unauthorized.¹⁸

Undocumented workers come to the United States through networks of family members and friends in a process called chain migration. Many of the most recent immigrants from Mexico and Guatemala are young men and women (some come alone at 14 years old) from rural, indigenous areas with low levels of education, perhaps third to sixth grade from Guatemala and sixth to eighth grade from Mexico.¹⁹ Many of the undocumented workers cross the U.S.-Mexico border with the aid of smugglers called *coyotes* to whom they may pay as much as \$2,000 for a trip across the desert or the Rio Grande (Rio Bravo) river. They will often then make contact with a contractor who will hire them to work for private businesses or corporations, but to get hired they need documents. The undocumented workers spend hundreds of dollars to purchase false or stolen social security card numbers to get work and buy counterfeit drivers' licenses for hundreds more so they can drive to and from their jobs.

Representing as they do almost a fifth of workers in some low wage industries, the organization of

these immigrants workers is an important goal of American labor unions. Today immigrant workers tend to be unorganized as are almost 90 percent of all American workers. Only 12.5 percent of all U.S. workers belong to unions, and only 7.8 percent of all workers in the private sector. New undocumented workers, many of them very young, without political rights, with few civil rights and limited labor rights, without knowledge of the English language, unfamiliar with the labor laws and the customary practices of the workplace are subject to particularly intense exploitation by employers. Immigrants may be paid less than the legal minimum wage, worked longer hours than the legal maximum, cheated out of overtime pay, denied rest breaks and lunch periods, and pushed to the limits of human endurance in jobs that are dirtier and more dangerous than those worked by native-born black or white workers. Yet without citizenship they are hard to organize because they can be easily intimidated by employers.

Guest Workers

IN ADDITION TO IMMIGRANTS, the United States government has guest worker programs, that is, programs for temporary workers from foreign countries who are not considered immigrants because they will be returned to their home countries at the end of their contracts. Employers seek these programs to maintain a labor surplus and keep wages low, to avoid the cost of mechanization, and to have a workforce unlikely to unionize. During World War I the United States permitted 77,000 Mexicans to come to work in the United States, about half of whom stayed on without permission after their contracts had ended. During the period from 1942 to 1964, to cover the labor shortages caused by the Second World War and the Korean War, the United States and Mexico cooperated to bring some 4.6 million Mexicans to work in the United States. Under the law, guest workers were supposed to receive free housing, medical care, transportation and the prevailing wage. Some workers did not receive those minimum standards and others were abused; all were subject to deportation if their employers complained.²⁰

Tens of thousands of immigrant guest workers still work in agriculture. During the 1980s and 1990s, the Special Agricultural Workers (SAW) legalization program allowed any unauthorized worker who had done at least 90 days of farm work in the preceding year to become an immigrant. Altogether some 1.2 million foreign workers became SAWs and some 558,000 SAWs who worked on farms during 1989-1990 represented 31 percent of all farm workers. By 1997-1998 SAWs were only 16 percent of the crop workers. Once farm workers become legal, they generally leave farm work for less arduous and better paying employment. When the program was ended, employers returned to the use of unauthorized workers.²¹ Still other programs provide temporary workers. In 2006 the United States State Department issued 372,254 H visas for temporary workers and trainees.²² In recent years the government has issued about 40,000 H2A visas for agricultural workers and about 60,000 to 90,000 H2B visas for non-farm workers.²³ A recent study by the Southern Poverty Law Center, "Close to Slavery," found that many H2A visa workers were virtually held as captives, cheated out of their wages, living in squalid conditions, denied medical benefits, and with no protection of their rights.²⁴

An Immigrant Labor Movement

IMMIGRANTS HAVE THROUGHOUT THE HISTORY of the United States been an important factor in the labor movement. Latinos in particular have well over a hundred years of involvement in labor unions in the United States.²⁵ In the Southwest, in the Chicago area, and on the East Coast Latinos and Latino immigrants have for decades played a leadership role in the labor movement. During the last decade the AFL-CIO and Change-to-Win unions, particularly the Service Employees International Union (SEIU), UNITE-HERE, and the Laborers (LAIUNA) have put much of their energy into the organization of low-wage immigrant workers, documented or undocumented. The

SEIU campaign Justice for Janitors has won important victories for janitors in cities throughout the country. Unions, however, have not always been sensitive to the immigrant workers' culture, conditions and needs, so immigrant workers and their allies have created Workers Centers both as vehicles for workers' and community struggles and as a bridge to the labor movement.²⁶

In 2006 the AFL-CIO entered into a partnership with the Workers Centers hoping both to strengthen the organizations and to bring them into a closer relationship with the union movement. Immigrant workers also take initiative on their own with little or no relationship to the labor movement initially, especially when they have a strong community base and a powerfully felt need. Over the last few decades we have seen Latino and other immigrant workers create a movement of dry-wall hangers in construction, truck drivers who work in the West Coast ports, and in innumerable little strikes and job actions around the country. Immigrant workers' huge numbers, their actual presence in the labor movement, and the tremendous potential that they represent provides much of the energy for the current immigration movement. Above all, the presence of more than ten million undocumented immigrants represents an enormous incentive: either these workers will be legalized and organized, or they will be forced to work for lower wages, without benefits, and in substandard conditions, thus dragging down the entire labor movement. The question then is, what are the vision, strategy and program that can organize these workers?

Immigrant Politics

TODAY IN THE IMMIGRANT COMMUNITIES and particularly among Latino immigrants, rival political visions, programs and strategies vie for leadership. On the one hand a coalition of the major religious, labor and immigrant organization pushes for the passage of the best possible realistic compromise on an immigration reform bill, while on the other hand grassroots community groups, leaders of some congregations, and some local labor unions push to more radical and confrontational strategies aimed at winning full civic, political and labor rights for all now. The conflict within the Latino immigrant community between political realism and social idealism has deep roots. The roots can be explained only by understanding the complexity of the immigrant experience.

The place of immigrants in American society is complicated by the dozens of countries from which they come, ethnic groups to which they belong and religions in which they believe. Latino immigrants alone are divided into 20 countries speaking not only Spanish or Portuguese but also dozens of indigenous languages. Only their presence in the United States and the common problems they face have made them Latino. Equally important is the highly stratified character of the immigration, one cohort after another, layer upon layer of immigrants coming over many decades. Some are legal; others have no legal standing. Even legal immigrants can be legal for many different reasons — as legal permanent residents, as guest workers, as refugees, as asylees — each with different laws and regulations governing them.

Overtime, parts of the immigrant community gain legal status and become citizens, through their individual adherence to the immigration law, by having children born here who are citizens, by marrying citizens, by amnesty under the 1986 Immigration Control and Reform Act, and in other ways. While some immigrants gained legal status, others failed to do so, and each year about 1.5 million new immigrants arrive, about 500,000 of them undocumented. The interests of the different layers can be quite distinct, though most react together against the discrimination, racism, exclusion they experience in American society. To fight the latter, immigrants who became citizens organized for reform. For as long as they have been in the United States Latino immigrants have formed organizations of a religious, civic, or political character all of which attempted to represent Latino interests.

Such organizations have adopted at different times and still adopt today positions that range from

accommodationist to reformist to revolutionary. Most Latino organizations, however, have tended to fight for full legal rights for Latino immigrants within the context of America's capitalist democracy. While principles may be significant, political differences arise principally on the basis of alternative strategies. The development of Latino organizations has paralleled in many ways that of African American organizations, with middle class leaders heading up the struggle for full civil and political rights, though sometimes challenged by nationalists and leftists offering alternative visions, principles and strategies. The League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC), for example, founded in 1929 and led by middle class businesspeople and professionals, adopted legalistic and lobbying strategies in the style of the NAACP. The Mexican American Political Association (MAPA), founded in 1960, worked to promote the election of Mexican Americans to political office. The National Council of La Raza (NCLR), originally established in 1968 as a Chicano organization in the Southwest, became a national organization that incorporated immigrants from Puerto Rico and Latin American countries in 1972. If LULAC is the Latino movement's NAACP, then NCLR is its Urban League, with financial support from many of the largest multinational corporations.

All of these organizations tend to be supporters of the Democratic Party, believing that having the Democrats in power will be better for Latinos. With their base among Mexican Americans who were U.S. citizens and their emphasis on electoral politics, such organizations often ignored and sometimes intentionally distanced themselves from Mexicans and other Latino immigrants. Or we may say that they tended to become most involved in immigrant issues at that moment when immigration reform raised the possibility of immigrants becoming citizens and therefore voters and Democrats.²⁷ Even more radical and independent organizations such as the La Raza Unida Party, an independent Mexican American party founded in Texas in 1970, focused on the Mexican American citizen.²⁸

Other models of Latino organization were put forward by the left, politics that represented a Latino civil rights movement, irrespective of citizenship. In the 1930s, the National Congress of Spanish-Speaking Peoples, led by the Communist Party, organized Latinos in the United States who were citizens, including both Mexican Americans and Puerto Ricans, who were immigrants from Cuba, the Dominican Republic and Spain. "Unlike some of the moderated Mexican-American organizations such as LULAC, which at the time differentiated between Mexican-Americans and Mexican immigrants, El Congreso opposed such differentiations and instead stressed the unity of all Spanish-speaking people, U.S. citizens or not. An attack on one Spanish-speaking group was an attack on all," wrote Bert Corona, a member of the Congreso.²⁹ This civil rights perspective appeared again in 1968 with the founding of CASA-HGT (Centro de Acción Social Autónomo-Hermandad General de Trabajadores), led by Bert Corona and Soledad "Chole" Alatorre, which focused on the needs of "undocumented Mexican workers and their families" and brought to the struggle the "conjugation of a class base with social justice and liberation aspirations." The CASA newspaper *Sin Fronteras* "Without Borders" carried on its masthead the slogan, "We are One because America [meaning the continent] is One."³⁰

One could say that these represent two poles of the Latino movement: one that tends to focus on citizens, fostering citizenship, voting and party politics and the other that focuses on immigrants' labor and social issues, includes citizens and non-citizens, and even has an international dimension, and tends to become a social movement. The first alternative tends to promote a politics of political realism since its objective is the election of Democrats, while the latter tends to engender a more radical politics, even when not explicitly articulated, implicitly raising the goal of a society where all, irrespective of borders and citizenship, have freedom, rights, and political power. The former naturally works to focus all energy on political reform and partisan politics, while the latter tends to push for an activist social movement that puts forces in the street and looks to use the power of immigrant workers and consumers through the strike and boycott. The first aims at inclusion in

America's capitalist democracy, the second, consciously or unconsciously, struggles to create a society which would be more democratic, more egalitarian and more just.

The political struggle among the Latino organizations is complicated by the other big social actors, particularly the Catholic Church, the labor unions, and the Democratic Party. The U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops together with the Mexican Conference of Catholic Bishops published in 2003 "Strangers No Longer: Together on the Journey of Hope: A Pastoral Letter Concerning Migration." Based on Catholic social teachings, the letter called for Catholic organizations and individuals to show compassion and solidarity with immigrants and calls upon the government to legalize the undocumented immigrants in the United States.³¹ While "Strangers No Longer" represents Catholic humanism at its best, at the same time it is the document of what is one of the most conservative institutions in the United States. Like the mainline reformist Latino organizations, the Church seeks the integration of immigrants into American society, albeit with full respect for their civic, social and political rights. Yet in 2006 the Catholic Church withdrew as Latino workers' power became manifest, and the Church opposed the attempt to turn the May 1 demonstrations into a kind of general strike.

America's labor unions see immigration reform as essential both to organizing immigrants and revitalizing the labor movement as well as to winning greater political power. The U.S. labor movement, now divided between the AFL-CIO and Change-to-Win, has come out in support for the legalization of immigrants who are now here and with a path to citizenship. The AFL-CIO has been clearer and stronger in its opposition to guest worker programs than Change-to-Win unions such as the Service Employees International Union (SEIU), though again all of the unions have tended to move toward a position of rejecting guest worker programs that do not offer gradual legalization and a path to citizenship.³² Different unions within the AFL-CIO and Change-to-Win have different levels of commitment to the immigrants and undocumented workers, but almost every major labor organization has now taken a position calling for "comprehensive immigration reform" meaning legalization and a path to citizenship for those now here and guest worker programs with legalization and citizenship provisions. Within the labor movement, as within the immigrant movement, the motivations and emphases of the national leaders of the unions and the AFL-CIO and Change-to-Win are different than those of the local unions made up of and led by Latino leaders.

The top union leaders want to pass an immigration reform law, and a labor law reform, that will make it more possible for them to organize the low-wage Latino work force, and in the end they will accept a compromise that includes as many of those workers as possible. To do so they are willing to accept conservative proposals to strengthen the border and increase internal enforcement. The local Latino union leaders whose members are connected with the immigrant communities and their millions of undocumented workers want legalization for all workers now and reject the notion of compromises that would exclude their friends and relatives, oppose long delays, and reject exorbitant fees and penalties such as fines. And they reject a stronger border and have little sympathy with internal enforcement. SEIU's Latino workers in California forced SEIU president Andy Stern to go to the West Coast and to reverse the union's position on guest workers. A struggle goes on within the unions between some national union leaders interested in reaching a compromise that would legalize some undocumented immigrants and Local leaders and members who want legalization for all now. The union leaders want to strengthen the unions as institutions while the local Latino opposition wants to build unions that are a civil rights movement as well.

Conclusion

THE CATHOLIC CHURCH, the labor unions and the mainline reform-minded immigrant organizations call for comprehensive immigration reform and now put their hopes in the STRIVE bill

introduced by Representatives Luis Gutierrez (D-IL) and Jeff Flake (R-AZ). The STRIVE bill would strengthen border controls and internal policing, legalize nearly all workers now in the United States illegally and give them a path to citizenship, and create guest workers programs but with the possibility of establishing permanent residence and later citizenship. At the same time it would involve long delays and expensive fees and penalties.

The immigrant opposition and its labor and religious allies, more grassroots in character and more committed to direct action, argue that not only is the bill inadequate, but that in reality it is only a temporary negotiating position that the more moderate forces will permit to be eviscerated in the Congress. Militants such as Nativos V. Lopez of MAPA and Javier Rodríguez of the National May 1st Movement for Worker and Immigrant Rights have strongly criticized the STRIVE bill. Rodríguez calls it a "corporate monster" because of what he sees as long delays, high fees, and what he sees as a guest worker program. Moreover these radicals reject the moderates' tactics with the emphasis on calls and letters to Congress and call instead for returning to the streets.³³

The question is whether the grassroots base of the movement made up of hundreds of local church congregations, Catholic and Evangelical, hometown clubs whose members come from different towns, cities and states all over Latin America, local unions and their activists, and the radio announcers who both respond to and sometimes lead their millions of listeners will come out for political realism or again hit the streets for legalization of all immigrants now. Will the Latinos and other immigrants flow into the channels of institutional power, or will they create an independent Latino social and labor movement? Under pressure from the mainline Latino organizations, the Church and the unions, but also linked by family and friendship to vast communities of immigrants, filled with hope for themselves, but also concerned about their loved ones and their workmates, the Latino immigrants themselves will ultimately make their own decision.

Footnotes

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3. Campbell J. Gibson and Emily Lennon, "Historical Census Statistics on the Foreign-born Population of the United States: 1850- 1990," Population Division, U.S. Bureau of the Census.
4. U.S. government figures cited in Migration News, Vol. 13, No. 3, July 2006.
5. Jeffrey S. Passel, "The Size and Characteristics of the Unauthorized Migrant Population in the U.S.: Estimates Based on the March 2005 Current Population Survey," Pew Hispanic Center, March 7, 2006.
6. Jeffrey S. Passel, Randolph Capps, and Michael E. Fix, "Undocumented Immigrants: Facts and Figures," Urban Institute, January 12, 2004. This study estimates that there are 9.3 million undocumented immigrants in the U.S. Another later study, Jeffrey S. Passel, "Size and Characteristics of the Unauthorized Migrant Population in the U.S.: Estimates Based on the March 2005 Current Population Survey," Pew Hispanic Center Report, estimates that there are 11.5 to 12 million undocumented immigrants.
7. "Nation's Population One-Third Minority," press release, U.S. Census Bureau, May 10, 2006.
8. Mary Kent and Robert Lalasz, "In the News: Speaking English in the United States," Population Reference Bureau, June 2006.
9. Carl Haub, "Hispanics Account for Almost One-Half of U.S. Population Growth," Population Reference Bureau, Jan. 2006.
10. Sandra Yin, "The United States at 300 Million," Population Reference Bureau," Sept. 2006.
11. The conquered territories with Mexican population were California, Arizona, New Mexico, and Colorado. On the experience of the Mexican people after their incorporation in 1847 see:

- Rodolfo Acuña, *Occupied America: A History of Chicanos* (New York: Longman, 2000), Chapter 2, "Legacy of Hate: The Conquest of Mexico's Northwest."
12. Manuel Gamio, *Mexican Immigration to the United States: A Study of Human Migration and Adjustment* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1930), 2 vols.; Lawrence A. Cardoso, *Mexican Emigration to the United States, 189- 1931: Socio-Economic Patterns* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1980), Most of these immigrants also settled in the Southwest, principally in California and Texas, some went as far as Chicago and Pennsylvania.
 13. Francisco E. Balderrama and Raymond Rodríguez, *Decade of Betrayal: Mexican Repatriation in the 1930s* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1995), *passim*.
 14. Manuel García y Griego, "The Importation of Mexican Contract Laborers into the United States, 1942-1965," in: David G. Gutiérrez, ed., *Between Two Worlds: Mexican Immigrants in the United States* (Wilmington, Delaware: Scholarly Resources Inc., 1996), 45-85.
 15. Juan Ramón García, *Operation Wetback: The Mass Deportation of Mexican Undocumented Workers in 1954* (Westport: Greenwood, 1980), *passim*.
 16. Juan Gonzalez, *Harvest of Empire: A History of Latinos in America* (New York: Viking, 2000).
 17. Passel, "Size and Characteristics," p. 1, and Randolph Cappes, Michael E. Fix, Jeffrey S. Passel, Jason Ost, Dan Perez-Lopez, "A Profile of the Low-Wage Immigrant Workforce," Urban Institute, Oct. 27, 2003.
 18. Department of Labor, "National Agricultural Workers Survey (NAWS)." While immigrants make up only 20% of all farm workers which includes farmers, they make up 78 percent of all wage earning crop workers.
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 20. Richard B. Craig, *The Bracero Program* (Austin: University of Texas, 1971); Ernesto Galarza, *Merchants of Labor* (Charlotte: McNally & Loftin, Publishers, 1964).
 21. Philip Marin, "Guestworker Programs for the 21st Century," Center for Immigration Studies, April 2000.
 22. U.S. State Department, Report of the Visa Office, for 2006.
 23. "H2A, H2B Programs," Rural Migration News Vol. 14 No. 1, January 2007.
 24. Southern Poverty Law Center, "Close to Slavery."
 25. Juan Gómez Quiñones, *Mexican American Labor, 1790-1990*, (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1994). Vargas Zaragosa, *Labor Rights Are Civil Rights: Mexican American Workers in Twentieth Century America*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005.
 26. On workers centers see: Janice Fine, *Workers Centers: Organizing at the Edge of the Dream* (Ithaca: ILR Press, 2006).
 27. A useful overview of Mexican American political organizations can be found in: Juan Gómez Quiñones, *Chicano Politics: Reality and Promise, 1940-1990* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1990).
 28. See the autobiography of the founder: José Angel Gutiérrez, *The Making of a Chicano Militant* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1998). Immigrants are hardly mentioned.
 29. Bert Corona, *Memories of Chicano History: The Life and Narrative of Bert Corona, as told to Mario T. García* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), 108-134, quotation from page 112.
 30. Arnaldo García, "Toward a Left without Borders: The Story of the Center for Autonomous Social Action-General Brotherhood of Workers," *Monthly Review*, July-August 2002, 69-78, quotation from page 72.
 31. U.S. Catholic Bishops Conference, "Strangers No Longer: Together on the Journey of Hope: A Pastoral Letter Concerning Migration from the Catholic Bishops of Mexico and the United States."
 32. George Raine, "Labor's lukewarm welcome/Unions divided over guest worker programs," *San Francisco Chronicle*, Wed., May 10, 2006.

33. See for National May 1st Movement: [here](#) and for MAPA see: [here](#), especially the "National Blueprint Summary."