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# FARMINGVILLE

A RESOURCE GUIDE

# FARMINGVILLE



## THE *FARMINGVILLE* CAMPAIGN

Spearheaded by Active Voice, the *Farmingville* Campaign helps demographically changing communities build bridges between long-term suburban residents and newly arrived immigrant populations, especially undocumented Latinos. The centerpiece of the campaign is the documentary *Farmingville*, which premiered June 22, 2004, on **P.O.V.** (a cinema term for 'point of view'), public television's annual award-winning showcase for independent non-fiction films. Working with advisors from national groups ranging from the National Conference of State Legislatures to Georgetown's Institute for the Study of International Migration, the Campaign:

- Uses the film to **draw public and media attention to issues affecting immigrants** in regions that are experiencing tension as a result of a sudden and extreme growth in their Latino populations.
- **Puts human faces on federal policies** and proposed immigration reform in order to facilitate more productive discourse and deliberation among policy makers and their constituents.
- **Highlights best practices for integrating newcomers** and resolving conflicts and links to groups in other communities experiencing similar growth. See **What You Can Do** and **Promising Practices** for specifics.

We encourage you to discuss these timely issues with colleagues, elected officials, community members and/or in your place of worship. Please also refer to the *Farmingville* Discussion Guide, which offers questions and tips for facilitating a productive dialogue. To download both guides, please visit [www.activevoice.net/farmingville.shtml](http://www.activevoice.net/farmingville.shtml) or [www.pbs.org/pov](http://www.pbs.org/pov).

For more information about the *Farmingville* Campaign, please contact [info@activevoice.net](mailto:info@activevoice.net)



To purchase a copy of *Farmingville* please contact **Docurama** at 1-800-314-8822 or [www.docurama.com](http://www.docurama.com)



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All photographs by Catherine Tambini except "Saturday morning counter protest in support of immigrant rights" (page 2) which is courtesy of the Workplace Project.



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**FARMINGVILLE CAMPAIGN  
NATIONAL PARTNERS**

Grantmakers Concerned with Immigrants  
and Refugees  
[www.gcir.org](http://www.gcir.org)

National Conference of State Legislatures  
[www.ncsl.org](http://www.ncsl.org)

The Brookings Institution Center on Urban  
and Metropolitan Policy  
[www.brookings.edu/urban](http://www.brookings.edu/urban)

Catholic Legal Immigration Network (CLINIC)  
[www.cliniclegal.org](http://www.cliniclegal.org)

Georgetown University Institute for the Study  
of International Migration  
[www.georgetown.edu/sfs/programs/isim](http://www.georgetown.edu/sfs/programs/isim)

National Immigration Law Center  
[www.nilc.org](http://www.nilc.org)

National Immigration Forum  
[www.immigrationforum.org](http://www.immigrationforum.org)

The *Farmingville* Campaign is supported by Carnegie Corporation of New York, the Horace and Amy Hagedorn Fund at the Long Island Community Foundation, and The Veatch Program of the Unitarian Universalist Congregation at Shelton Rock. Additional support for Active Voice/Global Lives comes from the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, the James Irvine Foundation and the Ford Foundation.

**Individual viewers** can use this guide to learn more about the issues presented in the documentary *Farmingville*, to discover innovative ideas and effective practices for working cooperatively with community members, governmental agencies, private organizations, and day laborers, to find solutions tailored to a particular situation, and to answer questions about day laborers, such as:

Who are day laborers? Why do they come here? What problems do they face? Why do some people resent their presence? What do they contribute?

**Advocates, Individuals and Community-based Organizations** can use these materials and resources as essential tools for sponsoring educational events and networking opportunities in conjunction with screenings of the film for community groups, day laborers, and public, private and governmental organizations. Below you will find examples of effective strategies that foster understanding and bridge building. They will answer such questions as:

What actions can you take? What resources are available to help you? Where can you find out about promising practices for successful cooperation between day laborers and long-term residents?

The shocking hate-based attempted murders of two Mexican day laborers catapult a small Long Island town into national headlines, unmasking a new front line in the border wars: suburbia. For nearly a year, Carlos Sandoval and Catherine Tambini lived and worked in Farmingville, New York, so they could capture first-hand the stories of residents, day laborers and activists on all sides of the debate.

*Farmingville* meticulously reveals the human impact of what has become the largest influx of Mexican workers in U.S. history – a migration that economic globalization is carrying beyond border areas and major cities and into the small cities and towns of America. The filmmakers talked to all sides and filmed the conflict as it unfolded in legal and political maneuverings, community organizing, vigilante action and, most tragically, violence. *Farmingville* achieves a remarkable intimacy with many of the principal players in the town’s drama, including the citizens who lead the protest against the presence of the day laborers, police, local government officials, leaders and organizers for the day laborers. The film provides a complex, emotional portrait of an American town in rapid transition from a relatively homogenous community to a 21st-century village.

**The Making of *Farmingville***

For Carlos, it all began when he saw a headline that read, “They wanted to get some Mexicans.” The headline referred to the attempted hate-based murders of two Mexican day laborers in Farmingville, New York, where controversy surrounding the day laborers’ presence had come to a boil. As a Mexican-American who grew up in pre-civil rights California where signs reading, “No Mexicans or dogs allowed” were still posted at some swimming pools, Sandoval couldn’t let the situation in Farmingville pass him by. “The reason that I was drawn to Farmingville, to the issue, was really fear, quite frankly, almost self-preservation. . . I felt that something had to be done.”



“... THE FACT IS THAT WHAT HAS HAPPENED IN FARMINGVILLE IS A PRODUCT OF SUPPLY AND DEMAND. THE FACT IS, IS THAT THERE IS A DEMAND FOR THIS LABOR.”

**DARREN SANDOW, BROOKHAVEN  
CITIZENS FOR PEACEFUL SOLUTIONS**

Teaming up with veteran documentarian Catherine Tambini, Sandoval embarked on his first film project. For nearly a year, the two lived and worked smack in the middle of Long Island, to capture first-hand the voices of individuals for whom the issue of immigration is not an abstract debate, but a reality of daily life. Early into the project, Sandoval and Tambini determined that they wanted the film to represent all sides of the immigration debate. They felt that living in the town was the only way they could begin to establish trust with the residents and get them to share their honest feedback. “We told people that we were really interested in telling their side of the story; that we wanted to make it a balanced film. . . .We really were very insistent in telling people that we were going to be fair to them, and just spending time with them, talking and listening to their points of view.”

Of course, this wasn't always an easy process. One night while walking home from dinner, a car veered at Sandoval. “It was more a gesture than an attempt to run me over,” he said, “but as I jumped to get out of the way, the driver yelled out, “You f---ing illegal, why don't you go back to the f---ing country you came from.”

It was also difficult to get access to the Mexican laborers, whose perspective and experience was critical, but who didn't want to appear on camera. Tambini developed a strong relationship with Matilde Parada, a refugee from El Salvador and founder of Human Solidarity, who was instrumental in helping them gain access to the laborers. But there were still times when Tambini had to crawl into the trunk of Sandoval's Jeep or shoot out of the smoked glass windows to get revealing scenes, such as interactions with employers. Carlos, on his part, attended the Spanish-language mass every Sunday to establish trust.

While all of their groundwork paid off, Sandoval asserts that it was the presence of the camera, as handled especially by Tambini, which allowed them to capture the story.

## Funders of the Film

### ITVS

John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation

Latino Public Broadcasting

The Sundance Institute

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NY State Council for the Arts

Bishop McGann of Caring Fund of Catholic Health Service of Long Island

Soros Documentary Fund

Long Island Community Foundation

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Molly Friedrich

P.O.V./American Documentary, Inc.

## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

### Who are day laborers?<sup>1</sup>

Day laborers are overwhelmingly Latino; one-third from Mexico, another third from the rest of Central America, and the final third including workers from South America. Most are also young and recent arrivals (less than two years) in the United States. About half of day laborers are single. However, an almost equal number (47 percent) have a spouse or are living with someone they support. While Latinos do comprise the majority of the day laborer population, the number of African day laborers has been increasing. A significant number of day laborers are educated. Their educational attainment ranges from no formal education to college and beyond, with the mean number of years in school hovering around eight. Almost 30 percent have over ten years of formal schooling.

### Who is an immigrant?

A foreign-born individual who has been admitted to reside permanently in the United States as a Lawful Permanent Resident.

### How do immigrants get admitted to permanently reside here?

Typically, a foreign-born individual seeking to become a Lawful Permanent Resident can do so in one of three ways:

- Through family-sponsored immigration, a U.S. citizen can sponsor his or her foreign-born spouse, parent (if the sponsor is over the age of 21), minor and adult married and unmarried children, and brothers and sisters. A Lawful Permanent Resident can sponsor his or her spouse, minor children, and adult unmarried children.
- Through employment-based immigration, a U.S. employer can sponsor an individual for a specific position when there is a demonstrated absence of U.S. workers.
- By winning one of a limited number of immigrant visas available in the annual diversity visa lottery that is open to would-be immigrants from certain countries.

### Who is an undocumented immigrant?

An undocumented immigrant is a person who is present in the United States without the permission of the U.S. government. Undocumented immigrants enter the U.S. either illegally, without being inspected by an immigration officer, or by using false documents, or legally, with a temporary visa, and then remaining in the U.S. beyond the expiration date of the visa. Undocumented immigrants are sometimes referred to as illegal immigrants.



### Who is a non-immigrant?

A non-immigrant is an individual who is permitted to enter the U.S. for a period of limited duration. Non-immigrants can be students, tourists, temporary workers, business executives, diplomats, artists and entertainers, and reporters. Depending on where they are from and the purpose of their visit, non-immigrants may be required to apply for and obtain a visa from the U.S. government. All non-immigrants—regardless of whether they have a U.S. visa—must also pass immigration inspection upon arrival in the U.S.

### What are the earnings of day labor?

In New York, day labor work pays better than minimum wage, but such labor is difficult, irregular, and often dangerous.<sup>2</sup> The average hourly wage (\$9.37) for day labor work is about \$4.22 more than the New York and federal minimum wage during normal demand conditions (i.e., spring and summer months). During the off-peak winter months, this figure drops to \$7.61, \$2.46 more than the minimum wage.

Average monthly wages vary for day laborers depending on seasonal periods and demand. During a good month, day laborers on average earn \$1,450. During a bad month, they earn on average about \$500.

Day labor work is a full time endeavor. Eighty-three percent of all day laborers work in this market full time; the other 17 percent hold a part time job that on average occupies about 27 hours of their seven-day work week.

### What kind of work do day laborers do?

Day laborers perform a wide variety of jobs, including dirty and/or dangerous tasks that might expose them to chemical wastes and other occupational hazards. They primarily work in the construction industry, including painting, carpentry, and landscape.

### Why work day labor?

In New York, day labor is often a stepping-stone to full-time/yearlong employment for workers. Despite earning low wages, many day laborers assist family members or friends in their country-of-origin in a significant way. In 2001, day laborers sent an average of nine payments (called remittances) home, amounting to a yearly total of \$3,641.

### Who hires day laborers?

Attracted by the low cost of the labor and lack of responsibility for benefits or ongoing employment—and sometimes because they simply cannot find anyone else to hire—homeowners and contractors are the primary employers of day laborers. Each group accounts for more than 41 percent of day labor employment opportunities, with contractors representing more than half of all employers.

### What are the risks of day labor?

Day laborers are routinely abused at the work place. About half of all day laborers report at least one instance of non-payment of wages. Other types of employer abuses include paying less than the agreed upon amount, not providing workers' compensation or medical insurance for job-related injuries or illnesses, abandoning workers at the work site, issuing bad checks in payment for work undertaken, not allowing breaks or water at the work site, robbery, and threats.

### What percentage of day laborers are documented?

Approximately 81 percent of day laborers are undocumented immigrants. When asked about barriers to employment they encountered, 31.3 percent of day laborers cited lack of documents and 34.7 percent lack of English proficiency.

### What are the legal rights of an undocumented day laborer?

The majority of employment and labor law protections apply to workers regardless of immigration status. This includes rights to file wage and hour complaints, report health and safety violations or access workers' compensation benefits.

### Would day laborers like to seek permanent residency if they could?

In a New York survey of day laborers, more than one-third believed they qualify for permanent residency – of those, 32 percent intend to apply for permanent residency.

### What is the gender breakdown of day laborers?

In New York, 94.8 percent are men and 5.2 percent are women. Men primarily work in the construction industry. Women work as housekeepers, janitors, and factory workers.

**“THE MEXICANS ARE GOOD PEOPLE. WE JUST NEED THE LABOR AND THEY NEED THE WORK. LAST YEAR I PUT AN AD IN THE PAPER FOR AMERICANS. I SAID LET ME GIVE IT A SHOT. AND IT WAS JOKE, THESE KIDS, IT’S JUST A JOKE... THEY WORK FOR TWO WEEKS, AND THEN THEY START NOT SHOWING UP, AND YOU KNOW, JUST COMPLAIN AND MOPE AROUND, YOU KNOW... IT JUST DOESN’T WORK.”**

**LOCAL FARMINGVILLE CONTRACTOR**

## WHAT YOU CAN DO TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE IN YOUR COMMUNITY

### • LISTEN.

Hearing the points of view of key stakeholders will lead to discovering each group's important issues and needs.

### • COLLABORATE.

Cooperative work between all of the different constituencies will lead to effective solutions, which minimize the disruption to residential areas and maximize the day laborers' contribution to the local labor force.

### • DISSEMINATE RESOURCES AND INFORMATION.

Living in a multi-cultural community is often a daunting new experience for both long-term residents and immigrants. Sharing information about effective strategies and available resources can lead to understanding and peaceful coexistence.

### • PROVIDE EDUCATION, TRAINING AND SERVICES.

Competent, informed and healthy workers (who are learning to speak English) are more likely to emerge as contributing members of the community.

### • SHARE AND DISCOVER.

This can be seen as a valuable opportunity for immigrants and residents to discover each other's cultures, share common ground, and capitalize on the benefits that the newcomers can bring to the social and economic fabric of a community.

## IMMIGRATION TODAY

### "THE BROWNING OF AMERICA"

The United States is in the midst of its fourth and largest wave of immigration. With approximately one million new immigrants entering the country each year, more than 11 percent of Americans are foreign-born.<sup>3</sup> Most of today's newcomers are Latino in origin, from Mexico, Central America and the Caribbean. Others come from many different countries in Asia, the Middle East, Africa and Europe. While the majority settle in traditional gateway cities with large immigrant communities and a history of employing foreign workers, a growing number are moving into smaller metropolitan areas, rural towns and the suburbs of long-established gateways.

Regardless of their numbers, ethnic origin, or destination, immigrants often arrive at America's front door to find the welcome mat missing. The National Immigration Forum reports that, while 50 percent of native-born Americans think immigration levels are acceptable, 40 percent think they should decrease and 10 percent think immigration should stop altogether.<sup>4</sup> These well-worn sentiments have forged a long trail of anti-immigrant

policies and legislation that spans the four hundred years of America's history.

Even when newcomers are welcome, their presence can challenge the communities where they settle with extra demands on schools, housing, law enforcement and social services.

Local governments, particularly in the newer destinations, often lack the basic institutional tools and experience to deal with the infrastructure needs created by the new population, and nongovernmental organizations are either overburdened or simply nonexistent.

Immigrants face challenges as well, struggling to find housing, jobs and a sense of community. In suburban and rural settlement areas, the receiving immigrant populations are small or non-existent and offer few resources for the newcomers. In places such as Farmingville, New York, working conditions in construction, landscaping and other low-skill service jobs are often poor.

To make matters worse, non-English-speaking laborers, such as those depicted in *Farmingville*, are often the focus of animosity and resentment from anti-immigrant factions, who believe they weaken the "social fabric" of American communities

"I'VE BEEN IN THE UNITED STATES ABOUT TWO AND A HALF YEARS. WHEN I CAME MY SON DIDN'T SPEAK. ... ONE DAY ON THE PHONE I SAID TO MY WIFE, 'WHO IS THAT TALKING?' 'IT'S YOUR SON.' MY GOD. HE'S CHANGED. BUT I HAVEN'T SEEN HIM. I'M LIKE A BLIND MAN. I CAN HEAR HIM, BUT I CAN'T SEE HIM. YEAH, THERE'S BEEN MONEY, THERE'S BEEN WORK BUT I'VE LOST MY SON'S PRECIOUS YEARS."  
EDUARDO, MEXICAN IMMIGRANT



# IMMIGRATION

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and threaten American jobs. In spite of this and the difficulties encountered by immigrants and the communities where they live and work, both parties benefit in many ways as well.

Employers need laborers. Without new immigration, the nation’s labor force, which has declined steadily since the 1970s, would have grown by only five percent over the past decade and would have experienced seriously constrained job and economic growth.<sup>5</sup>

The principal attraction for the foreign manual workers is the high wages relative to those back home. The U.S. minimum wage is at least six times greater than the average wage in Mexico. Many U.S. employers pay significantly above the required minimum, which accounts for the fact that even educated and white-collar workers from these sending countries make the trek north to take advantage of the economic opportunities.

**“I HAVE A REAL PROBLEM WITH PEOPLE  
HERE ILLEGALLY... I WANNA KNOW  
WHO’S HERE. I WANNA KNOW WHERE  
YOU’RE FROM AND I DON’T THINK THAT’S  
A TERRIBLE THING TO KNOW... I’D LIKE  
TO PUT A NAME TO A FACE.**

**LOUISE, FARMINGVILLE RESIDENT**

A recent article in *The Economist* summarized the situation as, “The truth about America’s immigration muddle is that it suits most people most of the time. Employers—from semiconductor firms to orange growers—get the workers they need, usually fairly cheaply; immigrants make a living and get an education for their children. An illegal farm worker is paid around \$7 an hour, half the rate for a legal one, but double what the same worker could get in Central America.”<sup>6</sup>

**“WE’RE A PROSPEROUS ECONOMY  
LOOKING FOR PEOPLE WHO ARE WILLING  
TO DO WORK. AND WE NEED DAY  
LABORERS. AND THERE’S THE TENSION.  
IT’S A TENSION THAT IS NATIONAL. BUT  
THE BATTLEGROUND IS REALLY FOUGHT  
OUT ON A LOCAL LEVEL.”**

**PAUL TONNA, SUFFOLK COUNTY  
LEGISLATURE**

**Multicultural society is a fact of American life. Communities can benefit from their diversity by acknowledging the economic contributions of foreign-born residents, establishing policies that promote their full economic and social potential and stopping barriers to immigrants’ integration.**

**Integration really entails several different activities:**

- Formal, rather than clandestine, inclusion in the labor market.
- Inclusion in mainstream institutions and activities that meet individual and societal needs – education, health and social care, housing.
- Inclusion in the institutions and obligations of civic society.
- Building good community relations and trust.

## IMMIGRATION TODAY

### THE CHALLENGES OF CHANGE: FARMINGVILLE IN CONTEXT

One highly visible manifestation of the unprecedented growth of the U.S. foreign-born population that occurred during the 1990s is the presence of Latino day laborers. Menial workers from Mexico and Central America represent the greatest number of legal and illegal immigrants coming to America in recent years. In fact, the longest, largest, and most continuous labor migration anywhere in the world is that from Mexico to the United States. An *International Herald Tribune* article stated in 2003 that “Nearly one Mexican in five regularly gets money from relatives employed in the United States, making Mexico the largest repository of such remittances in the world, according to a poll sponsored by the Inter-American Development Bank.”<sup>7</sup>

As communities of all sizes struggle to cope with seemingly overnight demographic changes, the issue of Latino day laborers is often seized upon to channel feelings of fear and resentment vis-à-vis community transition. The complaints of lost business, litter, catcalls, and other problems that have arisen in Farmingville are hardly isolated. Across the country, communities both large and small are expressing a need for effective solutions to day labor challenges.

As demonstrated in *Farmingville*, rapid immigration to local areas can shock communities and lead to significant tension. Since research indicates that immigrants tend to stay in a newly settled area for a long time, the issues need to be addressed, or the situation can explode into a “lose-lose” situation for everyone involved. Comprehensive and collaborative approaches involving all concerned parties are needed to

“I’M A RETIRED COP. I WAS IN THE MARINE CORPS. I HAVE A LOT OF RESPECT FOR THE LAWS OF THE UNITED STATES. IF I LIVED IN MEXICO AND I KNEW I HAD SOME ADVANTAGE HERE TO HELP MY FAMILY BACK IN MEXICO, I’D BE WADING ACROSS THE RIO GRANDE MYSELF. I’D BE ON A RAFT FLOATING FROM HAITI, I’D BE CROSSING THE BORDER FROM YUGOSLAVIA INTO GERMANY. I’D BE GOING INTO ENGLAND. I’D DO ANYTHING I CAN TO HELP MY FAMILY. AGAIN, I’M A HUMBLE CITIZEN AND I’M HERE TO REMIND EVERYBODY THESE ARE CHILDREN OF GOD THAT ARE COMING HERE FOR SOME HELP.”

MR. WINTERS  
FARMINGVILLE RESIDENT

reach successful solutions to day laborer issues on one level, and overall community health on another.

As the documentary *Farmingville* vividly demonstrates, successfully resolving these challenges is by no means easy. Farmingville is not alone in its struggles. San Rafael, California is another community whose efforts to organize and find a solution to day labor issues was derailed when anti-immigrant groups seized upon the situation to promote their larger agendas. With the disputes unresolved, the controversy continues and community tension runs high. This type of community discord is beneficial to no one.

The communities that successfully address the issues related to population change are the ones that accept the fact that the newcomers will most likely become long-term residents. Not only does this allow communities to move ahead in resolving contentious issues, but it is also greatly beneficial to their economic and social well-being. Take a look at the example of Chamblee, Georgia, described in the **Promising Practices** section.

Integration, rather than “inclusion” or “incorporation,” usually emphasizes that it is not only immigrants who need and want inclusion, but also the larger society that needs to open up and change to allow them in. This is a two-way process and a process that is not about absorption but change.

# CHANGE

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“...I THINK I WAS THE ONLY PERSON WHO ACTUALLY STOOD UP AND TRIED TO SAY THAT THESE ARE BASICALLY GOOD, HARD-WORKING PEOPLE WHO WOULD MAKE GOOD NEIGHBORS. AND I GOT ABOUT THAT FAR WHEN PEOPLE STARTED SCREAMING AND I DIDN'T GET TO SAY MUCH MORE THAN THAT.”

**BROTHER JOE MADSEN, RECALLING A COMMUNITY MEETING IN FARMINGVILLE IN 1998**



## **HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE: FOREIGN LABOR MATCHES ECONOMIC GROWTH**

The roots of today's new settlement patterns are complex. The construction booms and the proliferation of hotels and restaurants that accompanied the 1990s economic boom increased the demand for low-wage labor. U.S. employers encouraged the migration of foreign workers, and immigrants responded. During 1996–2000, the U.S. labor force expanded by 6.7 million people. Foreign-born workers comprised nearly half of the labor force increase. Male foreign-born workers accounted for almost one-third, and female foreign-born workers accounted for more than one-third of the increase.<sup>9</sup>

Also, during the 1980s, several corporate giants emerged in the processing of beef, pork, chicken, and fish. These industries began to relocate from the North Central states to the South and South Central and some Eastern seaboard states to be closer to the feedlots and to employ non-union, low-wage laborers.<sup>10</sup> Located in small, rural communities with little local labor, processing companies recruited immigrant workers from California and Texas, as well as directly from Mexico and Central America. Communities such as Rogers, Arkansas and Winchester, Virginia now have sizeable immigrant populations and the in-flow of immigrants is directly related to the food-processing industry. Today, active recruitment is often not needed because immigrant networks draw newcomers, often encouraged by hiring bonuses for friends and relatives.

Outside of construction, food processing, and manufacturing, new settlement areas are found in agricultural regions, particularly in areas specializing in crops that are labor intensive to grow and/or harvest. Again, the forces that have driven this process are complex. Growers in labor-intensive crops have cast a broader net to find workers, and there has also been a heretofore unprecedented “settling out” of new immigrants into new destinations. The “Latinization” of agriculture has occurred in the apple groves of Washington State, the mushroom sheds of New England, the grape and row crops of southern California and the orange groves of southern Florida.<sup>11</sup> Immigration is now more than ever a national phenomenon.

## IMMIGRANTS IN THE COMMUNITY: DID YOU KNOW?

### 1. Immigrants work more and are paid less than other groups in the labor market.<sup>12</sup>

- Foreign-born men (16 years old and older) have a higher labor force participation rate (79.8 percent) than native-born men (73.9 percent).
- Approximately 6 million undocumented immigrants participate in the labor force, representing about 5 percent of the total U.S. labor force and 10 percent of the low-wage workers.
- Almost 43 percent of immigrants work at jobs paying less than \$7.50 an hour, compared to 28 percent of all workers.
- Migrants are not making location decisions on the basis of social welfare – rather it is jobs that drive migration. During the economic boom of the 1990s, immigrants settled disproportionately in states with the worst welfare benefit systems.

### 2. The average immigrant contributes \$1,800 more in taxes than he or she receives in benefits and services provided by the government.<sup>13</sup>

- This includes taxes that contribute to the funding of public parks, public roads and all other state, local and federal services and benefits, as well as safety net benefits.
- Most of these tax dollars go to the federal government, but the bulk of the services immigrants use, such as health care and public assistance, are provided by states and localities. In the wake of the 1996 welfare reform law, even more federal funds are withheld for services provided by states to immigrants, placing an even greater burden on local and state resources.

### 3. Research on the topic of immigration's impact on wages and employment indicates that as a nation we gain economically from immigration.<sup>14</sup>

- The gain is not evenly distributed across all social groups. For instance, immigration does not appear to have a negative effect among natives in skilled occupations, but a recent study concluded that immigrants adjusting their status within the U.S. negatively impact the wages of native workers without a high school education.
- Overall, immigration is unlikely to have a tremendous impact on the relative earnings or gross domestic product per capita. There are many other factors that are more critical to the U.S. economy than immigration.

### 4. Immigration does not generally lead to increased crime.

- A *Newsday* article on September 1, 2000 presented a Suffolk County Police Department press release refuting claims that crime had risen along with the immigrant population. "We do not have... a crime wave in Farmingville," the police stated. The release showed that the number of arrests had remained stable during the big influx of day laborers from 1995-2000.
- One study done by the U.S. Department of Justice specifically on day labor hiring sites demonstrated that in several areas the police have publicly refuted the accusation that day laborer sites are linked to a rise in crime. For example, a spokesperson for the Los Angeles Sheriff's Department told the *Los Angeles Times* that crime in Ladera Heights, where many workers congregated, had decreased in the previous two years - the time period that corresponded to the increase in the day labor population there. In Mountain View, California, the Police Chief also told reporters that day laborers were not involved in crime. In Seattle, Washington, community members initially described the day labor situation as a public safety issue. However, the Seattle Police did an analysis of police reports of criminal activity in the area and found that the block where the laborers gathered generated fewer calls than surrounding blocks.

### 5. Cultural and language barriers can cause uneasiness between established residents and newcomers, which can lead to false perceptions of criminal behavior or activity.

- In some countries, for example, it is expected that large groups of people will gather on Sunday afternoons to relax, drink beer, socialize, and play soccer. But in some new settlement communities, established residents find these gatherings inappropriate and even threatening, even if no laws are being broken.



## PROMISING PRACTICES: LEARNING FROM SOLUTIONS THAT WORK

### REVITALIZED ECONOMY

Chamblee, Georgia

After addressing some initial contentious issues brought by rapid foreign-born population growth, this small Atlanta suburb in DeKalb County changed course and actively began to seek newcomer settlement and investment. Attracting immigrant businesses has revitalized the economy. In 1999, Chamblee's community development director put it clearly: "If the immigrants hadn't come, Chamblee would look like a bombed-out, 1950's American dream, complete with empty strip malls and abandoned buildings." Today Chamblee has higher tax revenues and a vibrant economy that capitalizes on its international flavor.

### COMMUNITY LIAISON

Park City, Utah

Park City, Utah created a position for a community advocate between the newcomers and the police department. The liaison reduced community tension by acting as a point person for the community at large, assisting police officers and teaching newcomers important skills, such as using police department resources, understanding how law enforcement operates in Park City and implementing a newcomer community crime prevention program. Newcomers now participate in the strongest neighborhood watch programs in Park City.

### PROVIDING EMPLOYMENT AND TRAINING

Casa de Maryland  
Silver Spring & Takoma Park, Maryland  
[www.casademaryland.org](http://www.casademaryland.org)

In 1985, Central American refugees and North Americans founded Casa de

Maryland in response to the needs of the thousands of Central Americans who came to the D.C. area after fleeing wars and civil strife in their countries of origin.

Following a number of complaints, some minor incidents and two largely unsuccessful INS raids, Casa de Maryland and key stakeholders set up an advisory committee to make recommendations for resolving the situation. The committee helped Casa de Maryland establish a Center for Employment and Training (CET), which has assisted over 10,000 workers in seeking day jobs, temporary jobs, and full-time jobs throughout the Greater Washington Area. The CET provides job information and placement and organizes worker initiatives designed to improve the quality of life, offer support and guidance, and equip the workers with the skills needed to obtain meaningful employment and economic self-sufficiency. Casa de Maryland serves immigrants from virtually every country in Latin America, as well as Africans, Asians and U.S. citizens, as needed.

### IMPROVING WORKING CONDITIONS

Day Labor, Incorporated  
The Southwest Center for Economic Integrity (SCEI)/Arizona Coalition to End Homelessness  
Tucson, Arizona  
[www.economicintegrity.org/daylabor.html](http://www.economicintegrity.org/daylabor.html)

Day Labor, Incorporated aims to improve working conditions for day laborers through a variety of strategies, including: 1) Monitoring and advocating enforcement of existing laws and regulations; 2) Developing, supporting, networking alternative hiring halls and worker education programs; and 3) Raising the general public's awareness of problems and practices in the day



#### CASA DE MARYLAND'S DAY WORKER

PROGRAM HAS BEEN SUCCESSFUL

BECAUSE MANY OF CASA'S EMPLOYEES

COME FROM SITUATIONS SIMILAR TO

THOSE OF THE DAY LABORERS. WE

UNDERSTAND AND CAN RELATE TO

THEIR CHALLENGES. THIS ALLOWS US

TO ESTABLISH THE TRUST NECESSARY

TO WORK WITH THEM EFFECTIVELY AND

HELP THEM INTEGRATE INTO AMERICAN

SOCIETY.

GUADALUPE ADAMS, EMPLOYMENT  
COORDINATOR, CASA DE MARYLAND  
APRIL, 2004

labor industry. Executive Director Karin Uhlich explains that SCEI's day laborer project has been successful because its staff maintains a very strong and active communication with day laborers. Their three-fold approach of research, education, and advocacy allows them to evaluate their programs and engage in a campaign that targets a broad base of stakeholders.

### **SAFE AND ORGANIZED HIRING CENTER**

Coalition for Humane Immigrant Rights of Los Angeles (CHIRLA)  
Woodland Hills, California

Woodland Hills is located in the San Fernando Valley, near Los Angeles, where tensions over the day labor issue peaked in the late 1990s. Residents near the hiring sites constantly called the police, complaining of public urination, drug dealing,

and the general nuisance that the day laborers caused. As in many of the other sites, initial INS sweeps did little to solve the problem.

The City of Los Angeles hired the Coalition for Humane Immigrant Rights of Los Angeles (CHIRLA) to establish a labor-hiring program. CHIRLA spoke to workers, police, the INS and the homeowners associations. Taking the recommendations of all these stakeholders into account, CHIRLA moved the workers away from the residential area, established a set of rules that addressed residents' complaints, secured permission from a local restaurant to use bathroom facilities, and worked with police and residents by attending homeowner meetings on a monthly basis. Pleased with the progress, the residents formed their own organization, called the Woodland Hills Day Labor Committee, which included members from the Los Angeles police department, CHIRLA, and the day laborers.

### **DAY LABOR HIRING CENTERS**

Many communities create hiring centers to avoid difficulties that develop around informal hiring sites at corners, streets, and parking lots. These centers typically have on-site staff that organizes and facilitates the process of hiring day laborers. Some centers also offer a broad array of legal, health, education, and citizenship services to meet workers' needs. Here are some examples of successful centers:

#### **Coalition for Humane Immigrants Rights of Los Angeles (CHIRLA), The Day Laborers Project**

Los Angeles, California  
Operates worker centers for day laborers in North Hollywood, Hollywood, Harbor City, West Los Angeles, and Downtown Los Angeles.  
[www.chirla.org](http://www.chirla.org)

#### **Day Worker's Center**

**Casa Latina: Centro de Ayuda Solidaria a los Amigos**  
Seattle, Washington  
Dispatches laborers to jobs and provides English-as-a-second-language (ESL) classes, informational workshops, skills training and health service support.  
[www.casa-latina.org](http://www.casa-latina.org)

#### **The Denton Humanitarian Association Hiring Site**

Denton, Texas  
A community collaboration between businesses, fraternal organizations, Boy Scouts, and individuals that operates as a hiring location without the support of municipal funds.

### **Temporary Skilled Workers Site**

Glendale, California  
Helps workers receive fair wages, conducts surveys on laborer satisfaction, emphasizes professionalism and seeks the advice of its members on all issues.

### **ORGANIZATIONS**

#### **The Day Laborer Research Institute**

Established in 1997, the Day Labor Research Institute conducts academic research into topics related to day laborers and works cooperatively with various governmental agencies, private organizations, and day laborers to find solutions tailored to each community's particular problems.  
[www.daylabor.org](http://www.daylabor.org)

#### **The National Day Laborer Organizing Network (NDLON)**

The mission of the NDLON is to strengthen and expand the work of local day laborer organizing groups, in order to become more effective and strategic in building leadership, advancing low-wage worker and immigrant rights, and develop successful models for organizing immigrant contingent/temporary workers. NDLON fosters healthy, safer and more humane environments for day laborers to obtain employment and raise their families. In this sense, NDLON advances the human, labor, and civil rights of day workers throughout the United States.  
[www.ndlon.org](http://www.ndlon.org)

## SUGGESTED READING LIST

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## SUGGESTED FILMS

For suggestions of other films that deal with issues of immigrant integration, please contact [info@activevoice.net](mailto:info@activevoice.net)

### Footnotes

1 The following questions and answers come in most part from Valenzuela, Jr., Abel and Melendez Edwin. 2003. "Day Labor in New York: Findings from the New York Day Labor Survey." New York. April 11, 2003.

2 The data regarding day laborers here primarily concerns state and local arenas, as national statistics about day laborers are currently lacking. Neighborhood Funders Group plans to release a study about national immigrant worker centers in Summer 2004 (email [nfg@nfg.org](mailto:nfg@nfg.org)).

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