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Room for Debate A Running Commentary on the News
April 22, 2009, 6:45 am

**Immigrant Children in Legal Limbo**

*By The Editors*

To accompany the final article in a *Times series on immigration*, Room for Debate examines the situation of young illegal immigrants who came to the United States as children with their parents and were raised and educated here. The article on the topic will appear over the weekend.


A series that examines the impact of immigration on American institutions.

*Legislation (called the Dream Act)* sponsored by Senators Richard Durbin, Democrat of Illinois, and Richard Lugar, Republican of Indiana, would give some of these young immigrants a chance to become permanent residents. It would extend to those who have stayed out of trouble, graduated from high school and either finished two years of college or two years of military service, and there would be a six-year conditional status period.

We’ve asked three immigration specialists what to do about this particular immigrant population, which is estimated at one million people. The discussion also includes the perspective of two young immigrants, Prerna and Nick, who were brought to the United States by their parents and who have been here a decade or more. They asked that their last names not be used because they do not have legal papers.

Please join the discussion in the comments section here.

- **Tamar Jacoby**, ImmigrationWorks USA
Reward Assimilation

Tamar Jacoby is president of ImmigrationWorks USA, a federation of employers seeking an overhaul of immigration law.

The Dream Act would probably benefit no more than a few hundred thousand young immigrants — a small fraction of the foreigners living in the U.S. without legal status. These youth are special, and they deserve special consideration. They’ve committed no known crime and have struggled against long odds, often with impressive results. For our sake as much as theirs, it makes sense to welcome them into American life — to allow them to finish their educations, serve in the military, begin careers and realize their rich potential.

But the legislation and its beneficiaries also teach two larger lessons — lessons that apply beyond this small group.

Our fear and misplaced moralism are blinding us to our own interests.

First, immigrants — the vast majority of immigrants — bring drive and skills to America. The Dream kids are stars — strivers of special promise. But they’re far from the only immigrants, legal and illegal, who help make the country prosperous and vital. Two-thirds of the students in U.S. university computer science and engineering programs are foreign-born. So are 25 percent of doctors and nurses. Immigrants hold a quarter of U.S. patents.

And even at the bottom of the economy, foreign workers’ willingness to take any job, anywhere, helps the economy run more efficiently. Because they are different than most Americans, either more or less educated, immigrants complement rather than compete with us — which makes us more productive and grows the economic pie for everyone.

Second, immigrants are assimilating, and we ought to reward them for it. The kids who would be covered under the Dream Act have mastered English. They’ve graduated from high school, often in families and neighborhoods where that’s difficult and discouraged. They’ve learned enough about America not just to fit in, but to succeed here. And many are willing to risk their lives for their new country.

But millions of newcomers, legal and illegal, are taking similar steps — although we do virtually nothing to help or encourage them. On the contrary, if they entered the country illegally — responding to our mixed signals, half-forbidding but half-inviting them to come do work we need done — we bar them from the very steps we say we want most from them: moving up the socioeconomic ladder and becoming fully participating members of society.

The lesson is obvious: Our fear and misplaced moralism are blinding us to our own interests. The Dream Act deserves to pass, whether alone or as part of a broad immigration overhaul that recognizes and welcomes the talent arriving on our shores.
Tighten the Rules

Mark Krikorian is executive director of the Center for Immigration Studies, which favors limits on immigration.

The stickiest part of the illegal immigration issue involves children. Illegals who came as adults are morally responsible for their own actions, of course. And U.S.-born children of illegals are automatically accorded American citizenship.

The issue is what to do about illegal aliens who were brought here as children and have grown up here. They made no decision to leave their native land and break another nation’s laws. And yet this may be the only country they’ve ever known.

End family chain migration and make sure the amnesty does not have a multiplier effect.

Amnesty advocates use the predicament of such people (many of them adults at this point) to try to engineer a broad legalization of illegal immigrants. This, in fact, is the strategic purpose of bill, which would give amnesty to certain illegal immigrants brought here before age 16. Though its scope is not nearly as narrow as advocates would have you believe, it is nevertheless a targeted amnesty. But it is one designed to politically leverage the dilemma of the most sympathetic group of illegals into a more general amnesty.

How do we know this? Because if advocates were truly concerned about “the children,” they would package this legislation, or something like it, with measures to ensure that 1) the adults who brought them here didn’t profit from that morally dubious act, and 2) future children wouldn’t find themselves in a similar predicament because of future waves of illegal immigration.

The first requirement would involve ending the family chain migration categories, so that people could sponsor only spouses and minor children from abroad — no parents, siblings, adult sons and daughters. Otherwise, the amnesty would have a multiplier effect, ballooning far beyond the original purpose.

The second goal, of ensuring that this amnesty doesn’t lead to more children brought here illegally in the future, would require, at the least, the requirement that all employers use the Web-based E-Verify system when hiring, to make it much more difficult for illegals to use fraudulent I.D.s to get jobs, meaning that fewer would come and more who are here would go home.

A legislative package that might actually make sense would have a rigorous legalization process for longtime residents brought here illegally as children (unlike the Dream Act, which is so lax as to virtually guarantee massive fraud). To compensate for such an amnesty, and to ensure its finality, the package must also permanently end chain migration and turn off the magnet of jobs for illegal immigrants.

A Diploma Is Not an I.D.

Nick is founder of Dream Act Portal, a Web site for undocumented students.

Sometime in junior high school I started asking my parents, “What are we going to do about our immigration status?”
“Nikolay, your job is to study,” they told me, “let us worry about things like that.” By my second year at James Madison High School in Brooklyn, it was obvious no one had an answer to my question. There was simply no “getting in line,” and, in the face of a 10-year ban from the country and people I love, no “going back.”

So I moved forward. In September 2004, amidst my parents’ disagreement and eventual divorce over the decision, I enrolled at Polytechnic Institute of New York University. Because I lacked proper documentation, I was unsure if I’d ever get my diploma. The emotional toll was layered on the financial cost, which my grandmother helped to pay by working past retirement in Germany.

The proposed bill is about more than a few star students who are in limbo because of hiccups in our immigration laws.

Last year, I graduated from N.Y.U.-Poly with a dual bachelor of science degree in computer engineering and electrical engineering. Unfortunately, my diploma, as lifeless as the dead tree it is printed on, is not sufficient as an I.D., which is required to take the Graduate Record Examination. With that, my academic career had ended, and my sights shifted toward the passage of the federal legislation.

Three years ago, while still in college, I founded the Dream Act Portal Web site. At the time, we were a community of a couple of dozen people, regularly invaded by those looking to “debate” us out of existence. The site has since grown into the largest community of undocumented students on the Web. It has served as a hub for undocumented students who wanted to go to college, but could not find the support and answers they needed elsewhere.

I find it disturbing that in this debate the personal accomplishments of people in this situation are considered important; those factors should be irrelevant. As I read the hate mail that makes it to our in box and the thousands of stories of pain, depression, hiding in plain sight, overcoming, and accomplishment that have been posted on our Web site, I see our struggle for what it is, a fight for human rights.

The Dream Act is not about a few star students who are in limbo because of hiccups in our immigration laws. There are more than a million people in this situation. The issue has grown into a crisis that is affecting some of the most determined, patriotic and brightest young people in this country. Our human rights are a prohibitively high price to pay in the opposition to the bill. We know, because we have been paying it.

Life in the Shadows

Prerna, who has a master’s degree in international relations, serves as an associate editor for Promigrant.org.

On tax day last week, my family paid $2,900 to the I.R.S. in business taxes. The property taxes are next, and we worry about the possibility of foreclosure on the house. But even with a graduate degree, I cannot even get a paying job at McDonald’s to help my family in these dire times.

“Get in line!” I am told. This is quite ironic since “getting in line” is precisely what made me an “illegal alien.” I was brought here legally on an F-2 student visa from Fiji when I was 14 and was legally here until I graduated from high school and wanted to attend college. At 17, my parents helped me apply for an F-1 student visa so I could continue my studies, but unfortunately, in the aftermath of September 11, my student visa extension was rejected.
With my family, friends and community here and only distant memories of a country we left, I have nowhere to go.

Why? My parents had filed for permanent residency (I-130) prior to this through my grandmother, who is U.S. citizen, so the immigration service would not grant me a non-immigrant visa to study in the United States. As a teenager, I knew nothing about immigration laws and was at the mercy of my parents.

After making the rounds to immigration attorneys and school counselors, we were assured that I would get my legal papers before I turned 21 and could attend college in the meantime.

I worked as a janitor for the family business while attending college, serving in the student government and coaching debate to disadvantaged youth. I commuted hours from my home to spend the days tutoring students, the evenings sitting in lecture halls and the nights doing janitorial work. After college, I entered graduate school. Upon graduation, my professors could not understand why I wouldn’t pursue a Ph.D.; my peers invited me to travel abroad. I could do neither, so I retreated into the underground.

The worst news came when an attorney told me that because I was older than 21, I could no longer seek permanent residency under the petition filed by my grandmother even though I was refused a student visa because I was a derivative beneficiary of that very petition. There was no room for adjustment of status, even through marriage to my partner, since the United States does not recognize same-sex marriage.

While my presence in this country is not a crime, the tag of “illegal alien” comes with a presumption of criminality, so I am wrongly deemed a criminal. The opponents of the legislation say that “illegal is illegal” and that lawbreakers should not be rewarded, yet they do not want to provide a way for us to live and contribute as law-abiding citizens.

What is American? Who is an American? The lack of a nine-digit Social Security number and a green card does not make me less American in my tastes, values and ambitions. With my family, friends and community here and only distant memories of a country we left, I have nowhere to go. I want to stay here, attend law school, become a public interest lawyer and professor, and serve my community — and stop living in the shadows of the only country we know as home.

A History of Legal Flexibility

**Hiroshi Motomura** is a professor at the U.C.L.A. School of Law. He is the author of “Americans in Waiting: The Lost Story of Immigration and Citizenship in the United States,” and a recent essay, “Immigration Outside the Law,” in the Columbia Law Review.

One of the great myths of immigration law is that the line between lawful and unlawful immigrants is clear and impermeable. The historical truth is that we have periodically granted lawful status to many newcomers, even if there was no immigration category for them and they came here outside the law.

The legal vehicles have been numerous. They include suspension of deportation, asylum, cancellation of removal, registry for longtime residents, the Cuban Adjustment Act, the Nicaraguan Adjustment and Central American Relief Act, the Haitian Refugee Immigration Fairness Act, the Immigration Reform and Control Act, and more. Looking beyond the technicalities, two common themes emerge.
What is simple is not always fair or in our national interest. And what is fair and in our national interest is not always simple.

We have given lawful status to non-citizens who are here because of events beyond their control. For example, America’s proud tradition as a refuge for those fleeing persecution is so deeply rooted that we often forget the way many of them arrived — without papers. In addition, we have legalized non-citizens based on their integration into American society and their contributions to our national future.

Reflecting these themes, immigration courts often grant lawful status on a case-by-case basis to individuals. And large groups of non-citizens already in the United States have occasionally been legalized.

The Dream Act carries on this tradition. It would give lawful status to children brought to America by events beyond their control.

Our immigration law has been able to adapt when strict application of the law would be wrong. We have changed the law to correct the injustices of exclusion based on race. We have reversed the inhumane effects of denying safe haven to refugees who lacked the proper visas. And the law has granted lawful status to many non-citizens who have earned their place in America, even if they first came outside the law.

Our history tells us why any bright line between legal and illegal immigration is a myth of deceptive simplicity. What is simple is not always fair or in our national interest. And what is fair and in our national interest is not always simple.

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I suppose ad hominem attacks are really off-base and unhelpful, but it’s really hard for me to respond to Mark Krikorian with anything else. If he’s so concerned with protecting the integrity of the legal system, his reasons for denying “amnesty” to adults, why the sudden concern with not bringing in others through the family chain. Thus, it’s hard not to think anything other than a nativist, and that his intellectual ancestors would not have wanted his biological ones in this country.

— Michael in BKLYN

Legalize them, tax them like ordinary citizens, and let’s move on.

— CP

See the mess that was created by the government not enforcing immigration laws or controlling the border? I blame every president since Kennedy, and Congress of course.

This is just one more example of how the federal government has let us down. It is sad to see this great country failing, a little bit at a time.

— Phyllis North

What is illegal? Are we a country of laws or men? This is just to broaden the Democrats base. Send them all back to where they came from.

— paul, Berlin, NY

The U. S. should be highly pleased and even flattered that so many people wish to come here to live, including hundreds of thousands of Haitians who sail for hundreds of miles past the People’s Paradise of Cuba to get to Florida. I suspect they understand significant differences between the U. S. and Cuba, differences that are lost on many “smarter” people in America.

That said, a country that refuses to control its borders has lost all right to exist.

Very obviously, for a number of reasons the U. S. needs immigration, but it should determine the kinds of immigrants it admits. That determination should not be made by the immigrants, themselves, employers or by politicians seeking the votes of highly ethnocentric special interest organizations.

Sadly, a combination of three forces is working to produce virtually unlimited migration to the U. S.: first, the combination of greedy employers (mostly Republicans) who want compliant and vulnerable labor; second, Democrats who want bullet-ballots (i. e., unthinking “straight ticket” voting) to “give” to the voters “free” goodies like health care, education, disability benefits, and social security; third, the
ethnocentric groups who eagerly play the race card to silence opposition.

If we are talking about somewhere between 12 and 20 million illegal immigrants we are engaging in purposeful delusion. Via chain migration and via “family reunification” the 12-20 million will soon swell to at least 60-100 million, as people from all over the world learn of the “free” goodies to be had in America by voting for them and the fact that the U.S. has lost control of its borders and does not have the political will to reestablish control.

The consequences to the natural environment and to American society are simply too horrifying to contemplate. Can we say “Third World” throughout North America?

— Edward
6. April 22, 2009 9:47 am Link

Mr Krikorian, would you learn to use any of these terms: “illegal immigrant”, “undocumented immigrant”, or “unauthorized immigrant”, instead of just plain “illegals”? No one else who breaks the laws is called an “illegal”. “Illegal” is an adjective, not a noun. There is no such thing as an illegal human being. Just from your choice of words everyone can realize that you are full of hatred toward foreigners. It’s called xenophobia, look it up.

— MS
7. April 22, 2009 9:48 am Link

A more diverse samplings of opinions would have been appreciated.

In any event, I find it hard to disagree with two premises– (1) illegal immigrant children who were brought here when they were very young and have lived here for long periods of time should be given the opportunity to become legal residents; and (2) when this happens, the law should make sure that whoever brought them here in violation of the law (their parents, other relatives, family friends) cannot piggyback on their newly acquired legal status for their own benefit.

— Mowry
8. April 22, 2009 9:56 am Link

Tamar Jacoby paints quite a rosy picture. In cold fact, many immigrants from Mexico and Central America bring no skills other than a strong back and a willingness to take any wage offered. They don’t read and/or write Spanish or English. Their kids don’t master English–80% of incoming freshmen in the Cal State University system need remedial classes in English and/or math.

Since many colleges love a good victim story, these students often slide into spots, despite having lower grades and scores.

Perhaps some tuition abatement program could be implemented, after these students prove that they can actually do the work in colleges.

— Belinda
9. April 22, 2009 9:57 am Link
Who among us cannot count among our ancestors those who sought refuge? Why are our doors closed to those who seek no more than that which our grandparents sought?

It ought not be a matter of achievement or skin color, but a matter of desire. If they desire to come, let them come.

— wc

10. April 22, 2009 9:57 am Link

It is ludicrous to suggest that we should not make the distinction between lawful and illegal immigration. We should and we must. Ms. Jacoby erroneously refers to illegal aliens as “immigrants” throughout her piece. They are not immigrants. They broke the law coming into and staying in America, and unfortunately their children must suffer the consequences as well. Most illegals stole social security numbers to create false identification (ID theft). So long as we continue to reward and encourage illegal activity, these crimes will continue to increase. And the assertion that immigrants assimilate may be true for lawful immigrants from overseas nations, but I have not seen this in the Latino community. I have been in parts of America where no English is spoken at all, and the culture feels exactly like Mexico. Where is the assimilation?

And just because, as Mr. Motomura suggests, we have always periodically granted amnesty to illegals, doesn’t mean that it is something we should continue or can afford to continue doing. We also used to deny women the right to vote. Just because we always do something doesn’t mean we should continue to do so. In today’s America, we are becoming overpopulated, and our social government entitlements and public programs are overwhelmed by illegals who use those resources. What is “fair and in our national interest” is better immigration control and stronger enforcement of our immigration laws.

— A.V.

11. April 22, 2009 9:57 am Link

California is bankrupt due to the huge bureaucracy that supports illegal immigrants.

Our schools in last place and over populated
Our prisons full
Our welfare drained
Our children given 2nd place to the “special needs” of illegal immigirants.

Now that they have been educated at America’s expense they need to return the favor and go to their home countries and make them better places before there is nothing left of ours.

— Dina

12. April 22, 2009 9:58 am Link

There is no question that children are not responsible for the law-breaking of their parents. These children did not ask to be torn from their original home, their extended family, and their language and culture.

How wonderful that these children succeeded so spectacularly in spite of the disruption and worry within the family that they would be discovered and deported! They should be honored by offering them the chance at citizenship.

— Caroline

13. April 22, 2009 9:58 am Link

It seems to me that there are two main reasons that illegals come here to the States. The first is the
opportunity to make a living, scant as that may be, and the second is to have a baby born in the US who then automatically becomes a citizen. Perhaps if we eliminated that right this country would not be so attractive to illegals. I know that sounds tough as it’s been done that way since time immemorial but it could be one solution.

— harry
14. April 22, 2009 10:06 am Link

Four years ago I was called upon to be Scoutmaster of a start-up Boy Scout troop for Latino immigrant boys in Marietta, Georgia.

It became apparent to me that these were young men who needed help and needed to be exposed to positive things to do with their life, pure and simple. They were here because their parents brought them here and they were obedient sons. They did not ask to become illegal immigrants in the United States. Many of them were quite resentful at being made to come here and leave their birthplaces and extended families in the towns in Central America in which they were born.

These boys were clearly “at risk”. Many were not up to grade level in education in their native language, let alone in English. Most would drop out of school at 16 and join the labor pool. Some would get involved in violent gangs, possibly even those involved in drug trafficking or other crimes, and if so, they might end up in jail and become a financial and legal burden to the American public.

Therefore, I stopped worrying about their immigration status, or lack thereof, and just asked the simple question, “How can I help these young men to become productive participants in American society”? Rather than railing against them for being in the country without legal status, I decided to say “What can I do personally to better the situation of my community and make it a better place for everybody to live?”

The answer, for me, was to try to give these Central and South American immigrant boys the same Boy Scout program, experience and opportunities offered to the upper-middle-class Anglo-American boys that the Boy Scout program was already serving in our community. The immigrant boys could benefit from this sort of help much more than the citizen boys, and it would be of greater benefit to the community to offer this program to them.

My efforts weren’t entirely successful, but I feel that I made a positive contribution to my community in doing so.

I hope that every individual can ask themselves what they can do personally, today, to help young people in their community, and take action. It’s much better than railing against millions of illegal immigrants, or waiting for Congress or their local government to solve this mess with laws, reforms, and police actions, however well-intentioned.

— Wheat Williams
15. April 22, 2009 10:10 am Link

As an immigrant myself, I deeply understand the situation from both points of view. I have friends who fell into that category and are no longer eligible for the Dream Act as it is proposed now.

However, the current economic climate will affect the out come of any legislation. To appease most Americans who are concerned about jobs and the derivative effect of legalizing their families, I believe there should be stipulations to the legislation dealing with this issue.

To ensure that there are no derivative beneficiaries from the legislation, once a beneficiary of the DREAM Act obtains citizenship, they can only sponsor a family member, if that relative is outside the U.S at the time of the filing. This will be facilitated at at U.S embassy in that country ensuring that they do not
jump the line.

I think this is an amicable solution to both parties.

— Ray

16. 16. April 22, 2009 10:12 am Link

We have children of illegal immigrants who have been educated at taxpayer expense, probably with taxpayer healthcare provided as well, and now we want to legalize them and probably the rest of their family. Illegal immigrants depress wages which is why the Wall Street Journal is so supportive of unlimited immigration. What good is my American citizenship to me?

— Mike

17. 17. April 22, 2009 10:13 am Link

I don’t understand on what grounds my tax money can be used to pay for benefits for people who broke the law to be here. Why don’t I just squat in the UK a few years and hope the government there gives me a free education?

Taxes, like illegal migration, are a legal question whose violation causes no direct physical harm. So if the government wants to use my taxes to pay for people who committed one nonviolent crime, I see no reason why I shouldn’t commit another nonviolent crime and not pay my taxes. Why submit to one law if it aids the violation of another?

— Tim

18. 18. April 22, 2009 10:16 am Link

I’m tired of seeing illegal immigrants treated and discussed as though they are vermin instead of human beings.

All of us are here because someone in our family immigrated and someone here gave them a chance to make a life for themselves.

Immigrants are not bad for America, they are good for it. Yes they are a bit more work for those of us who are already here, but so what? They are hard working and ask for little.

Let their children be educated so they can contribute and be productive adults.

— ekatz

19. 19. April 22, 2009 10:19 am Link

An immigrant is someone who has entered and remains in this country legally. Those who enter this country illegally are foreign invaders not immigrants. Let us get our definitions straight before deciding how to deal with them.

As for right of citizenship by birth, perhaps it might be advisable to re-examine that definition as well. A citizen by right of birth might be redefined as one who had at least one parent who was, at the time of birth, a U.S. citizen or a legal resident of the U.S.

— Donald Surr

20. 20. April 22, 2009 10:23 am Link

Hiroshi Motomura,
The Dream Act would be a disaster. You’re Japanese, dude. Let’s make US immigration law and practice more like Japan, or more like every other modern industrialized nation for that matter. These high immigration rates, and mass amnesties are further fragmenting and Balkanizing our nation, driving the middle and working class to a lower standard of living and causing widespread unnecessary suffering.

— Kurt
21. April 22, 2009 10:29 am Link

The DREAM Act does not cost the state or taxpayers any money. In fact, the DREAM Act will raise revenues for the federal and state governments, public colleges, and the Social Security System.

With the DREAM Act, immigrant kids who are currently excluded from access to higher education and the economy, who feel despair and choose not to go to college, will be allowed to participate fairly, and will pay all the same fees and tuition as all other students. This is expected to bring in millions of dollars to state colleges and universities, according to the non-partisan policy analysts like the Rand Corporation, taxpayer protection advocates, various state boards of higher education, the Chronicle of Higher Education, and others.

The United States needs to invest in the education and training of as many future workers and future taxpayers as we can to revitalize our economy and move our workforce and economy into recovery as soon as we can. The United States needs a vibrant employee base to compete and grow. The Baby-Boomer generation is retiring and the economy is changing. Long-term economic recovery and growth will depend on a skilled and educated workforce to compete in the global economy.

— DreamActivist
22. April 22, 2009 10:30 am Link

The Dream Act itself sounds like a great idea.

However, regarding the issue of educating children of illegal immigrants in general, I don’t believe any of the contributors addressed the issue of cost. Educational resources in this country are stretched to the breaking point, especially in many of the immigrant-heavy communities. This is, unfortunately, a zero-sum game - every illegal that takes a place in a public school classroom consumes resources that would otherwise go to citizen children.

The idea that we shouldn’t punish children for the sins of their parents is compelling, but too simplistic. The children of parents who didn’t save money for their education, for example, are punished in this society every day with far less opportunity. Why should illegal immigrants be any different?

This is not a matter of cold-heartedness, but simply a realistic assessment - many, many of our citizens in this country right now are hurting, and hurting badly. Helping them is going to require money; there is not enough of it to spend on the citizens of OTHER countries that manage to skirt our immigration laws.

By the way, I am a registered Democrat and a big Obama supporter, so please don’t try to turn this into a right-left issue - it’s not.

— DC
23. April 22, 2009 10:33 am Link
I challenge the accuracy of the category “American but illegal.” Of course these people are American, because Mexico is in America, just as Canada is in America. The United States is arrogant to claim to be the only America.

— Owen Findsen
24. April 22, 2009 10:35 am Link

I’m with Mark Krikorian. A precisely targeted legalization would be reasonable if chain migration were eliminated, if automatic citizenship for children of illegal aliens were eliminated (it’s the reason many cross the border) and if E-verify were extended. It’s not just about laws, unlike what #1 said, although that’s important. It’s about numbers. How many people can the United States support sustainably at the current lifestyle? I suspect we’ve grown beyond sustainability. The policies immigrant advocates would have us pursue will boost the population nearly 50 percent by 2050. That’s nearly 450 million, instead of the current 305 million. If you think that’s sustainable, go read The Future is Drying Up, the cover story in the NYT Mag, October 21, 2007. (Google The Future is Drying Up and it should come up.) And if you think it’s compassionate, read Nick Kristof’s “Compassion that Hurts” (put that in the NYT search box and it will come up).

— David Holzman, Lexington MA
24. April 22, 2009 10:38 am Link

The more we deal with this issue, the more we end up in the “revolving door”. This issue has many colors: It is political, because the politicians play games with the Latinos to get their votes. Moral, because we deny them the common rights of our citizens, the legality to work and be recognized. Economical, because their illegal status and their limited means, overburden our systems, hospitals, social agencies, schools, etc. Here in Florida, they live in their own ghettos, labor in menial jobs, drink beer and alcohol on week ends, and their women seem to be expecting more children each year. We allowed them to come to “work” although thousands of them simply arrived via the illegality and stayed forever, and those who are already here want to bring the whole town and “enjoy” their status. After all, they are ignored by Immigration which does not bother to check who they are and how did they arrived here. We game amnesty to few millions few years ago and that did not prove to be any solution did it?. And it appears we are again promulgating another “amnesty”, to again avoid to face the issue head on and with the force of our laws simply to allow our politicians to play again the same old game for fear of loosing their Washington seats. If anyone would want to live in this country, enjoy the same privileges, work for the ideal in their lives etc. let them come through the process of our laws of immigration, let them enter with the proper visa, integrate into the system and society legally, work legally, live legally, pay taxes and achieve their dreams and opportunities just like anyone else who like us adopted this great country and respect its laws front he beggining. Another amnesty is not the solution.

— Rev.W.Muniz
25. April 22, 2009 10:38 am Link

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“Teaching has gotten a bad rap, at least as far back as when Mark Twain said: "Those who can't do, teach."”

— onlein
Teaching: No 'Fallback' Career

“As a professional educator and administrator for the past 32 years, I know you cannot walk out of the courtroom, laboratory, sales meeting, or for that matter any venue into the classroom and assume you will be a successful teacher.”

— Bob
Teaching: No 'Fallback' Career

“There may well be CIA people who merely followed orders, and while this defense leaves most reasonable people squeamish, I can certainly understand the arguments for why they should be let off the hook.”

— B. Thomas
The Memos: Torture Redefined

“In some respects the actions of the Obama administration are even more reprehensible than those of the previous administration.”

— Steve
The Memos: Torture Redefined

“Probably the closest to the truth mentioned by the pundits is the fear or lack of self-confidence in younger managers when facing older workers.”

— Norman Clark
Older Workers Need Not Apply

“Why are the Somali pirates so thin if they are doing so well at piracy? They are from a totally lawless society, with no hope for a better life.”

— MJones
Capture Pirates, on Land and Sea

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- March 29: Foreign Ways and Scars Test U.S. Clinic

Discussions

- The Best Ways to Teach Young Newcomers
- Voices of Experience: Educating Immigrants
- The Competition for Low-Wage Jobs
- Reader Views: Migrants and Low-Wage Jobs

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In Room for Debate, The Times invites knowledgeable outsiders to discuss major news events and other hot topics. The aim is to hear a variety of voices — well-known, up-and-coming or unexpected — on a range of issues. Discussions include opinion, analysis, context — sometimes all three. Contributors may debate one another, or simply share what they know and move on.

We welcome feedback, so please post comments and e-mail us your suggestions and ideas. Reader comments are moderated.

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