

September - October 2007 U.S. Immigration Alert!

A Monthly Newsletter from National Immigrant Solidarity Network
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No Immigrant Bashing! Support Immigrant Rights!

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Next 16 Months for the Immigrant Rights Movement.... What Is Our Strategy?

Lee Siu Hin

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At our recent 7/27-29 NISN National Grassroots Immigrant Strategy Conference at Richmond, VA, we believe our goals for the next 16 months should be focused on building multi-ethnic, multi-constituent, broad-based grassroots immigrant rights movements across the country-especially in the southern states and the rural communities. We envision this as a de-centralized volunteer-based community-rooted immigrant rights movement with youth, women, workers and community members playing a more active role on campaign formulation and decision making processes to shape and lead the movement.

What does this mean for the immigrant rights movement? Clearly, with the "08" factor around the corner, the Congressional comprehensive immigration legislation is most likely dead until after the 2008 elections--although there is still a possibility of passing some small scale "pro" immigrant legislation. It is more likely that Congress will pass anti-immigrant legislation to provide funding to build the border fence, increase domestic spying and to continue with detention and deportation. We will see more local-level anti-immigrant ordinances popping-up across the country.

The immigrant rights movement should learn the lessons from the past. We must re-exam our strategies and carefully analyze the challenges and opportunities for the next two years if we are to build a new national immigrant strategy(ies) that will be broad based, inclusive, politically principled and tactically accomplishable.

Politically, we should focus LESS on Congressional legislation for the next two years, and focus MORE on building local coalitions, useful resources, and community-based education campaigns, such as: "know your rights" training, and local immigrant campaigns that will directly benefit communities, such as: counter-raids, detention & deportation support networks with useful resources; immigrant labor rights campaigns; campaign against local anti-immigrant ordinances; and linking the immigrant rights movement with other struggles, such as: war in Iraq and globalization.

Legislatively, never accepts "less than perfect" immigrant bill: Some "bi-partisan" bill supporters had been misleading and even threaten to say if we don't accept the "less than perfect" bill--we'll never get anything. In reality, we cannot support the bill because it's far worse than "less than perfect." No one should argue "separation but equal" is the best solution for our survival. We should ask for the best, fight for the best and push for the best!

Furthermore, we need to focus to build a tactical alliance between different movement and community groups, the recent fight against Social Security No Match Letter shows there's an important link between immigrant rights movement with labor and civil liberty organizations. In addition, we also need to support the immigrant-run anti-war to end the war in Iraq/Afghanistan, and counter-recruitment campaign, and the African-American run civil rights movement, such as Jena 6 campaign.

Yesterday We Marched, Today We Organized, Tomorrow We'll Achieve Our Dreams and Goals!

Together We Build A New National, Broad-Based, Immigrant Rights/Civil Rights Movement!

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10/1 Latest News on Fight Against Social Security No Match Letter

Court Extends Order That Blocks Government From Implementing Flawed Social Security No Match Rule

American Civil Liberty Union

SAN FRANCISCO - After a hearing today, a federal judge extended an order that temporarily stops the government from implementing a new Department of Homeland Security (DHS) rule that would cause U.S. citizens and other authorized workers to lose their jobs, and which would illegally use error-prone social security records as a tool for immigration enforcement. The judge's order also stops the Social Security Administration (SSA) from beginning to send notices to approximately 140,000 employers across the country notifying them of the new rule, which would impact approximately eight million workers. The temporary restraining order is not to exceed ten days.

"We are pleased that the judge saw the need to continue to block this rule that would lead to increased exploitation of workers," said John Sweeney, President of the American Federation of Labor and Congress of Industrial Organizations (AFL-CIO). "More than 70% of SSA discrepancies refer to U.S. citizens but the DHS regulation would encourage employers to fire any worker based on these erroneous discrepancies, especially if she has an accent or is perceived to be foreign born."

Today's order comes as a result of a lawsuit filed in August by the AFL-CIO, the American Civil Liberties Union, the National Immigration Law Center (NILC) and the Central Labor Council of Alameda County along with other local labor movements. In the lawsuit, the groups charge that the misguided rule violates the law and workers' rights, imposes burdensome obligations on employers, and will cause discrimination against workers who are perceived to be immigrants.

For years the SSA has sent "no match" letters to employers if the name and social security information reported by a worker on a W-2 form does not match up with the information contained in SSA databases. The "no match" letters were never considered reason to believe that an employee did not have permission to work in the U.S, and currently employers who receive "no match" letters are not required to take any action. In fact, there are many innocent reasons for such discrepancies such as clerical mistakes, name changes due to marriage and divorce, and the use of multiple surnames that are common in many parts of the world.

Under the new DHS rule, employers receiving "no match" letters might be required to fire employees whose SSA discrepancies are not resolved within 90 days after the "no match" letter is received. If the employer does not respond to a "no match" letter, DHS may conclude that the employer had "constructive knowledge" that an employee was not authorized to work in the U.S. and prosecute the employer accordingly. Today's order was handed down in the United States District Court for the Northern District of California. In addition to the AFL-CIO, which is represented by the law firm of Altshuler Berzon LLP, other parties bringing the lawsuit include the Central Labor Council of Alameda County, represented by the ACLU, the ACLU of Northern California, and NILC, as well as the San Francisco Labor Council and the San Francisco Building and Construction Trades Council, represented by Weinberg, Roger and Rosenfeld.

Lawyers on the case include Scott A. Kronland, Stephen Berzon, Jonathan Weissglass, Linda Lye and Danielle Leonard of Altshuler Berzon LLP; Jonathan Hiatt, James Coppess and Ana Avendaño of the AFL-CIO; Lucas Guttentag, Jennifer Chang, Mónica M. Ramírez and Omar Jadwat of the ACLU Immigrants' Rights Project; Alan Schlosser and Julia Mass of the ACLU of Northern California; Marielena Hincapié, Linton Joaquin and Monica Guizar of NILC; and David Rosenfeld and Manjari Chawla of Weinberg, Roger and Rosenfeld.

The complaint, a complete list of plaintiffs, and other information about the lawsuit: <http://www.aclu.org/nomatch>

The July 27-29, 2007 NISN National Grassroots Immigrant Strategy Conference

A 3-days conference ends with successful adoptions of National Immigrant Solidarity Network's 2007 - 2008 Strategic Immigrant Campaign Framework!

The conference was held at University of Richmond, Richmond School of Law, Richmond, VA. Nearly 80 people from California to Massachusetts came to attend our annual conference. Despite the threat from anti-immigrant groups counter-protest, we'd received warm coverage from Richmond media, and an adoption of National Immigrant Solidarity Network's 2007 - 2008 Strategic Immigrant Campaign Framework.

During the conference, we had heated debate on recent and current immigrant legislative proposals, and what strategies we should use. At the end of the conference, we agreed our goals for the next 16 months should be focused on building multi-

ethnic, multi-constituent, broad-based grassroots immigrant rights movements across the country-especially in the southern states and the rural communities.

We envision this as a de-centralized volunteer-based community-rooted immigrant rights movement with youth, women, workers and community members playing a more active role on campaign formulation and decision making processes to shape and lead the movement.

Politically, we should focus LESS on Congressional legislation for the next two years, and focus MORE on building local coalitions, useful resources, and community-based education campaigns, such as: "know your rights" training, and local immigrant campaigns that will directly benefit communities, such as: counter-raids, detention & deportation support networks with useful resources; immigrant labor rights campaigns; campaign against local anti-immigrant ordinances; and linking the immigrant rights movement with other struggles, such as: war in Iraq and globalization.

- 1. Pressure Political Candidates at 2008 Elections**
- 2. Link Immigrant Rights Movements with Other Struggles, and Building a Multi-ethnic, Multi-constituent-based Immigrant Rights Movement**
- 3. Campaign against Raids, Detention & Deportation; and Support National Sanctuary Movement**
- 4. Support Immigrant Labor Campaigns and Day Labor Centers**
- 5. No to the Border Fence and Militarization of the Border**
- 6. Strategic Resources for the Immigrant Activists**
- 7. Support Local Grassroots Immigrant Campaigns**
- 8. Supports Education Opportunities for Immigrant Youths**
- 9. Immigrant Legislation**
- 10. Diverse Tactics for Immigrant Rights Campaign**

For more information about the conference, please visit: <http://www.2007conference.net>

10/9 12:00 PM EST: NISN National Conference Call

Tuesday, October 9th 12:00 PM - 1:00 PM EST (9:00 AM - 10:00 AM PST)

Dial-in Number: 1-605-725-3600

Participant Access Code:105275

The call is open to the public, agenda of the call:

- 1) The latest immigrant legislation and how we responds to the latest immigrant raid, detention & deportation, and legislative proposal from the Congress.
- 2) Planning for our 2008 mobilizations (includes May Day 2008).
- 3) Immigrant counter-recruitment campaign
- 4) The new coordinating committee and working group for the Immigrant Solidarity network

Minutemen Watch

Projects of National Immigrant Solidarity Network: <http://www.MinutemenWatch.net>

9/27: Competing border watch groups headed for the border

Associated Press

PHOENIX -- The Minuteman Civil Defense Corps and a spinoff group of disaffected Minuteman members plan separate month long deployments along the border, beginning Friday and Saturday, respectively.

The Minuteman group said it will have members on patrol along the Mexican border in Arizona, California and Texas, and also plans to post members along the Canadian border in Washington state.

In Arizona, the group will conduct a border watch at the King Anvil Ranch near Three Points, about 40 miles southwest of Tucson in the Altar Valley. Last week, it announced it would be conducting monthlong operations in October, with plans for media coverage of speeches and a "Granny Brigade" event on Oct. 6.

Meanwhile, the Patriots' Border Alliance, created after disagreements this spring led to the expulsion of several original Minuteman Civil Defense Corps members and officers, is to stage its inaugural 30-day border watch operation starting Saturday in the Palominas area, south of Sierra Vista and west of Naco. It held a three-day operation in August, also near the border south of Palominas.

That location is where the initial Minuteman Project border watches were staged.

The PBA's "Operation: Allied Minutemen," announced on its Web site, said, "We present a forum in which all Minutemen are welcome to operate as one voice, within one movement, with one goal."

Both groups will post volunteers to watch for and report suspected illegal immigrants or other illegal activity to the Border Patrol.

Minuteman founder and president Chris Simcox said in a statement that border agents are receiving less support and facing increased risk, especially since the National Guard has begun pulling its soldiers from the border after a yearlong support mission.

"The Border Patrol receives an endless supply of empty political rhetoric — and little else — from Washington lawmakers who refuse to set the priorities or provide the necessary resources for securing our nation's porous borders," Simcox said.

The anti-illegal immigration group holds semiannual border watches known as "Secure America" in the fall and late spring.

Border Patrol spokesman Jesus "Chuy" Rodriguez said of Simcox's group, "They're operating on private property for the most part. That doesn't impede us from doing our job.

"They're doing what they're doing and we're doing what we've got to do," he said.

Immigration News Briefs

Immigration News Briefs is a weekly supplement to Weekly News Update on the Americas, contact: nicaaj@panix.com

1. NY EXPANDS DRIVER'S LICENSE ACCESS

On Sept. 21, New York governor Eliot Spitzer announced new rules under which the state Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV) will issue driver's licenses without regard to federal immigration status. The new rules reverse a policy change adopted four years ago under governor George Pataki that made it virtually impossible for immigrants to obtain driver's licenses if they could not prove legal status. Under the new rules, the DMV will accept a current foreign passport as proof of identity without also requiring federal immigration documents. The policy does not require legislative approval and will be phased in starting in December. It will be tied to new antifraud measures including the authentication of foreign passports and the use of photo comparison technology to ensure that no driver has more than one license. The State Department of Insurance estimates that the new rules will save New York drivers \$120 million each year by reducing premium costs associated with uninsured motorists by 34%.

Implementation of the new policy is to start at the end of 2007 with a relicensing process for some 152,000 residents who have had New York state licenses but couldn't renew

them under the Pataki rules, said motor vehicles commissioner David J. Swarts. A second phase, to begin in April, will allow people to seek first-time licenses. This phase will involve more rigorous screening, Swarts said, including a four- to six-week process of authenticating foreign passports and other foreign identity documents. [New York Times 9/22/07]

2. RAIDS AT MCDONALD'S IN NEVADA

Early on Sept. 27, Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) agents arrested at least 56 people in raids at 11 McDonald's restaurants in the northern Nevada towns of Reno, Sparks and Fernley. "They are people suspected of being in the country illegally," said ICE spokesperson Richard Rocha. "As far as I know, they were all McDonald's employees." In Reno ICE also raided the franchise corporate headquarters for Sierra Golden Arches, which operates the restaurants. The agents had search warrants for all the raided sites. The franchise company is owned by Luther Mack, who told News 4 that "as an employer, I do not knowingly hire or employ undocumented or unauthorized workers." Lisa Howard, a spokesperson for McDonald's Corp., said the company had no comment on

the arrests. "This is a local situation with a local operator," she said.

Rocha said the investigation into the restaurants began five months ago and was sparked by an identity theft complaint. A local law enforcement agency then gave ICE information that unauthorized workers were employed at specific McDonald's restaurants, Rocha said. ICE was working with Washoe County social services to help provide care for children whose parents were arrested in the raids, Rocha said. The workers arrested would be transferred to an unidentified local detention center to await deportation proceedings, Rocha said. The raids drew immediate criticism from Reno mayor Bob Cashell and local immigrant rights activists, who estimated the number of people arrested to be closer to 100. The Republican mayor joined a news conference in front of the federal courthouse late on Sept. 27, called by local Latino leaders and members of the American Civil Liberties Union. "We don't approve of the Gestapo methods ICE is using," said Gilbert Cortez, a Latino leader who urged area residents to stay home from work in protest the next day, Sept. 28.

Cashell said he opposed the strike call and is against "illegal immigration," but "there has to be a better way to do this." He said he would contact Nevada's congressional delegation and ask the city council to look into the raids. "Think of some of the people who were arrested and picked up; they have children. They don't know where their mama or their daddy is. That's not right." [AP 9/28/07; KRNv.com 9/28/07]

3. TEXAS: 2,000 RALLY AGAINST DEPORTATION

On Sept. 26, some 2,000 people rallied at City Hall in Irving, Texas, a suburb west of Dallas, to demand that Irving officials stop handing over people held at the city's jail to immigration authorities. Demonstrators waved US flags and chanted "We are America."

Irving police have turned over at least 1,600 people to ICE since June 2006 under the "Criminal Alien Program," which targets immigrants accused of crimes. Opponents of the program say the Irving police engage in racial profiling; that people stopped for minor traffic infractions are being handed over to ICE; and that the policy has made local residents fear contacting police. The week of Sept. 17, Mexican Consul Enrique Hubbard Urrea warned immigrants from his country to avoid Irving. Community leader Carlos Quintanilla said he would organize a boycott of Irving businesses if the city persisted in the policy. A few counter-demonstrators carried signs in support of the deportation program. Two counter-demonstrators were arrested for attacking protesters at the rally; police said Jerry Don Grayson put his hands around a demonstrator's neck and Teresa Williams scratched at other protesters. They each face a misdemeanor assault charge and were out on bond on Sept. 27. [Dallas Morning News 9/27/07; AP 9/27/07]

4. LONG ISLAND RAIDS PROTESTED

ICE agents raided homes on Sept. 24 in the Nassau County towns of Westbury, Glen Cove, Hicksville and Port Washington on New York's Long Island, with support from

two sergeants and six officers of the Nassau County police. On Sept. 26, ICE raided homes in Freeport and Hempstead, assisted by four Nassau County police officers. A total of 82 immigrants were arrested in the raids.

On Sept. 27, at least 50 immigrants and immigration advocates gathered in Hempstead to protest the raids that took place in Latino communities in the towns of Hempstead, Westbury, Brentwood and Central Islip. "We cannot continue terrorizing families and breaking families apart," said Omar Henriquez, board president of the Hempstead-based Workplace Project. Also on Sept. 27, Nassau County Police Commissioner Lawrence Mulvey complained that his department had been "misled" by ICE about the nature of the raids. ICE had asked Nassau police to be present during the execution of arrest warrants for Nassau County residents who were affiliated with gangs, Mulvey said. The Nassau County police department had repeatedly asked ICE to share a list of suspected gang members targeted with arrest warrants, Mulvey said, but the request was only granted on Sept. 27--four days after the raids started. "We had asked for a list of the targets on the warrants because we have a very accurate and up-to-date database on gangs in Nassau County," Mulvey said. "It was promised and not delivered." According to Mulvey, the ICE agents appeared to have outdated intelligence on where some of the suspects were located.

Only three of those picked up in the raids were suspected gang members, said Mulvey. It was not clear whether the three were named in the warrants; Mulvey had earlier stated that none of those arrested were named in the warrants. Most or all of those arrested were out-of-status immigrants discovered at the raided homes--including a father who was caring for his four-month-old daughter while his wife was at work. The man was forced to leave the baby unattended when ICE arrested him on Sept. 24 in Westbury, his wife said at the Sept. 27 press conference criticizing the raids.

Mulvey said that if he thought the goal of ICE had been to arrest undocumented immigrants, the department would not have assisted. The presence of police during the raids erodes the trust developed between police and the community, which is crucial to getting victims and witnesses to cooperate in investigations, Mulvey noted. "This sets us back," he said. "We suffer the consequences of the mistrust that develops." Mulvey also said the ICE agents who took part in the operations appeared to have come from various locations across the country and didn't even wear the same uniforms.

"We withdrew from any involvement in any further operations," Mulvey said. "There will be no future cooperation unless these issues are ironed out." [Newsday 9/28/07; AP 9/28/07]

5. ARIZONA SHERIFF RAIDS DAY LABOR SITES

Maricopa County Sheriff's deputies arrested nine day laborers on Sept. 27 near the Good Shepherd of the Hills Episcopal Church in the town of Cave Creek, Arizona, north of Phoenix. For more than six years the church has been a safe haven for laborers looking for work. Sheriff Joe Arpaio

ordered the arrests after the town passed two new ordinances on Sept. 24 targeting day laborers: one toughens the town's ban on loitering; the other prohibits cars from stopping on town streets. The new laws are set to take effect on Oct. 24. Arpaio praised the new regulations, but said: "We're not waiting for the 30 days for these ordinances to be implemented." In the Sept. 27 arrests, agents from Arpaio's Illegal Immigration Interdiction ("Triple I") Unit stopped two vehicles as they exited the church's parking lot, one for speeding and the other for a broken taillight, Arpaio said. The drivers were given warnings; the day laborers riding in the vehicles were arrested. No citations were issued. "The drivers were legal, but the passengers were illegal," said Arpaio. "We've been doing this all over the Valley." [*Arizona Republic (Phoenix) 9/28/07; KPHO (Phoenix) 9/28/07*]

On Sept. 25, Arpaio announced that his deputies had arrested 34 out-of-status immigrants that day in Maricopa County's West Valley area. "We're up to over 730 that we have arrested under that state law that nobody else is enforcing," Arpaio bragged, referring to a 2005 Arizona law that makes smuggling people a felony. Arpaio claimed that he's getting a 90% conviction rate. "And my message to all these illegals--stay out of this county," he said. [*KTAR News (Phoenix) 9/25/07*] Maricopa County sheriff's deputies have been trained by ICE to enforce immigration laws; in addition to arresting immigrants under state laws, they have detained more than 4,200 people under federal immigration laws. [*KPHO 9/28/07*]

On Sept. 20, Maricopa County Attorney Andrew Thomas signed an agreement with Arpaio to cooperate in enforcing a new state law that will impose sanctions on employers who knowingly or intentionally hire undocumented immigrants. Thomas said he chose to partner with Arpaio's office because of its "track record of enforcing our immigration laws and not caving in to political correctness." Thomas will assign up to \$1 million of the \$1.4 million budget that the legislature gave him to enforce the new law to pay for the Sheriff's Office investigations. [*Arizona Republic 9/21/07*]

6. FARM LABOR CONTRACTOR FINED

On Sept. 27, following a two-week trial and five days of deliberations, a federal jury in US District Court in Yakima, Washington, ordered the Los Angeles-based international labor contractor Global Horizons to pay \$317,000 in damages for violating federal labor laws and discriminating against workers. The amount includes \$17,000 in compensatory damages to three farmworkers and \$300,000 in punitive damages to hundreds of workers.

The award comes in a class-action lawsuit filed in 2005 by Columbia Legal Services of Yakima, seeking damages of \$1.6 million on behalf of about 600 farm workers who worked for Global Horizons in 2005 and other workers the company declined to hire. The jury found the contractor violated the federal Farm Labor Contractors Act by failing to provide the jobs promised to the workers, and discriminated by failing to hire the workers or by firing them and replacing them with "guest workers" under the federal H2A program.

Workers said their jobs were given to "guest workers" from Thailand.

"This is a victory for farm workers everywhere who have been harmed by the unlawful practices of Global Horizons," said Lori Isley of Columbia Legal Services. Liability for Green Acre Farms of Harrah and Valley Fruit Orchard of Wapato, local growers who used workers supplied by Global Horizons, will be determined in a later hearing by Judge Robert Whaley. [*Yakima Herald 9/28/07*]

7. MARCHERS RALLY AT GEORGIA PRISON

On Sept. 15, some 100 people rallied outside the Stewart Detention Center in Lumpkin, Georgia, a privately-run immigration prison, to protest the treatment of detainees. The rally culminated a week-long 105-mile march through six counties, organized by the Prison & Jail Project, a 15 year-old civil rights and prisoner rights advocacy group based in Americus, Georgia. The group's annual "Freedom Walk"--now in its 12th year--highlights racial and social inequities in the criminal justice system in rural southwest Georgia.

About eight people from the Minuteman Civil Defense Corps and the Atlanta Minuteman Project held a counter demonstration with banners reading: "Enforce our existing laws" and "Secure our borders." The Stewart Detention Center is operated by the Corrections Corporation of America, a for-profit prison company, under contract for Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE). It opened in October 2006 and with about 500 employees it has become the largest employer in Stewart County, one of the poorest counties in Georgia.

"This is a for-profit prison. Is America about turning prisoners into commodities?" asked Anton Flores, a leader of the faith-based Alterna community, which co-sponsored the Lumpkin protest. The groups also pointed out that the prison's remote location makes it difficult for attorneys or family members to visit detainees. Flores said he planned to visit detainees from El Salvador and Colombia later in the day. "I will let them know that there are people who see them as people," he said. [*Associated Press 9/15/07; WALB.com (Albany, GA) 9/13/07; Email Message from Anton Flores 9/18/07*]

8. ARRESTS AT TEXAS MILITARY BASE

On Sept. 14, Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) agents arrested 12 construction workers at the Fort Bliss US Army post in El Paso County, Texas, for lacking proper work permits. The 12 were detained after Military Police and ICE agents interviewed 335 workers at a housing construction site at Fort Bliss and one at Biggs Army Airfield on the base.

Most of the workers were employed by four subcontractors for Balfour Beatty Construction, said Winn Maddrey, a Balfour Beatty spokesperson. The four companies were doing framing, drywall, rock-wall building and flooring at the sites. Maddrey said the subcontractors are required to provide documentation of workers' immigration status to Balfour Beatty, and it is the subcontractor's responsibility to

verify the information. The prospective employee must present a copy of the form certifying his documentation and personal identification before he is issued a work badge, Maddrey said.

ICE agents will continue an investigation into the source of the false documentation, post officials said. Fort Bliss spokeswoman Jean Offutt said it will be up to the prime contractor for Fort Bliss housing to determine whether any action will be taken against the subcontractors. [*El Paso Times 9/15/07*]

9. ILLINOIS WORKERS FIRED OVER NO-MATCH

On Sept. 19, eight Latino workers were fired from the Ballco Manufacturing plant in Aurora, Illinois, apparently over allegedly mismatched Social Security numbers. The next day, Sept. 20, a number of other workers walked off the job at Ballco and joined their fired co-workers on a picket line outside the plant. Early on Sept. 21, 15 of the workers who protested the firings were also fired. On Sept. 21, more than 20 workers formed two picket lines outside Ballco, carrying signs that read "Unfair Labor Practice Strike" and "Honk for Justice." The protesters said they had been called individually into a supervisor's office and told that the Social Security numbers they had provided did not match government records. "They just told me, 'There's a problem with your Social Security number, so we're going to have to fire you,'" said Arturo Lopez, a machine operator at the plant, which manufactures steel balls, valves and pipe

fittings. Another machine operator, Gonzalo Bello, said: "They said if I ever fix the problem with my Social Security number that I can try to come back."

Marcos Samano, a supervisor at the plant, said he was initially told to stay at Ballco through the end of the year to train new employees, but he was fired after walking out to join other workers in the protest. Samano said he was confused about apparently being fired for not documenting his employment eligibility, although he had been working at the plant for eight years. Ballco declined to comment on the firings. [*Chicago Tribune 9/22/07*]

10. BORDER AGENCY ARRESTS 202 IN ALABAMA

Between Sept. 2 and 14, US Customs and Border Protection (CBP) agents arrested 202 out-of-status immigrants in Mobile County, Alabama, according to Ken Fuller, the agent in charge of the CBP station in Mobile. The two-week crackdown, dubbed "Operation Uniforce III," targeted migrants who were traveling through Alabama by vehicle after crossing into the US from Mexico. In announcing the arrests on Sept. 17, Fuller said that more important than the number of people arrested is the information gathered from those arrested, including when, how and where they crossed from Mexico into Texas. The Border Patrol, in partnership with other law enforcement agencies, plans to continue these operations in the future. [*Press-Register (Mobile, AL) 9/7/07, 9/17/07*]

Commentary

On the DREAM Act: An Open Letter to Latino and Latina students and all leaders of immigrant rights organizations

Fernando Suárez Del Solar
August 5, 2007

Fernando Suarez del Solar, whose son Jesus, was one of the first U.S. servicemen killed in Iraq, become an outspoken peace activist, and Founder/Director Guerrero Azteca Project: <http://www.guerreroazteca.org>

In the wake of the failed immigration reform, passionate discussions have arisen among various organizations both for and against the DREAM Act.

It give me great joy to see students taking non-violent action to find a solution to the immigration question. Many of them came to the United States as children and have finished their high school education. Now, because they lack legal documents, they face an uncertain future that may deny them the opportunity to attend college or find a decent job. The DREAM Act offers them a light at the end of an otherwise dark and uncertain road.

I see students on fasts, in marches, lobbying elected officials, all in the name of the DREAM Act's passage. But BEWARE. Be very careful. Because our honorable youth with their dreams and wishes to serve their new country are being tricked and manipulated in an immoral and criminal way.

Why do I say this? Simply put, the DREAM Act proposes two years of college as a pathway to permanent residency but it also includes a second option linked to the so-called war on terror-"two years of military service." Our young people may not see that this is a covert draft in which thousands of youth from Latino families will be sent to Iraq or some other war torn nation where they will have to surrender their moral values and become a war criminal or perhaps return home in black bags on their way to a tomb drenched with their parents' tears.

How many of our youth can afford college? How many will be able to take the educational option? Unfortunately very few because the existing system locks out the children of working families with high tuition and inflated admissions criteria. Most

will be forced to take the military option to get their green card. But what good is a green card to a dead person? What good is a green card to a young person severely wounded in mind and body?

I ask our undocumented youth to read the following passages regarding the plans of the Pentagon and the Bush administration:

In his testimony before the Senate Armed Services Committee on July 10, 2006, Under Secretary of Defense David Chu said: "According to an April 2006 study from the National Immigration Law Center, there are an estimated 50,000 to 65,000 undocumented alien young adults who entered the U.S. at an early age and graduate from high school each year, many of whom are bright, energetic and potentially interested in military service...Provisions of S. 2611, such as the DREAM Act, would provide these young people the opportunity of serving the United States in uniform." More recently, Lt. Col. Margaret Stock of the U.S. Army Reserve and a faculty member at West Point told a reporter that the DREAM Act could help recruiters meet their goals by providing a "highly qualified cohort of young people" without the unknown personal details that would accompany foreign recruits. "They are already going to come vetted by Homeland Security. They will already have graduated from high school," she said. "They are prime candidates." (Citations from research by Prof. Jorge Mariscal, UC San Diego)

As you can see, our undocumented youth are being targeted by military recruiters. And equally important is something that few people have mentioned-there is no such thing as a two year military contract. Every enlistment is a total of eight years.

Given these facts, I invite all young people who are filled with hope and dreams and energy to fight for human rights and for a fair pathway to legalization. But they must also demand that the military option of the DREAM Act be replaced by a community service option (as appeared in earlier drafts of the legislation) so that community service or college become the two pathways to permanent residency. Only then will they avoid becoming victimized by a criminal war as my son Jesús Alberto did when he died on March 27, 2003 after stepping on an illegal U.S. cluster bomb. Through education or community service our undocumented youth can contribute to their communities and their future will be filled with peace and justice.

Please Donate to National Immigrant Solidarity Network!
All Donations Are Tax Deductible!

We need to reach our \$25,000 goals by the end of the April!

Can You be part of the history to support us to support our immigrant organizing?

Make check payable to ISN/AFGJ and it will be tax deductible! Send your check to:

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Los Angeles, California 90048**

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About National Immigrant Solidarity Network

NISN is a coalition of community, immigrant, labor, human rights and student activist groups, founded in 2002 in response to the urgent needs for the national coalition to fight immigrant bashing, support immigrant rights, no to the sweatshops exploitation and end to the racism on the community. Please visit our website:
<http://www.ImmigrantSolidarity.org>

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Please donate to ISN! (All donations are tax deductible!)

Check pay to: NISN/AFGJ
Send to: ActionLA / The Peace Center
8124 West 3rd Street, Suite 104
Los Angeles, California 90048

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