

September U.S. Immigration Alert!

A Monthly Newsletter from National Immigrant Solidarity Network

September 2005 Issue, Volume 9

No Immigrant Bashing! Support Immigrant Rights!

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Linking the Humanitarian Crisis of Hurricane Katrina, Immigrant Rights Struggle with Peace & Global Justice Movements

Commentary: National Immigrant Solidarity Network

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The U.S. war in the Iraq and Afghanistan impacts directly on the unfolding catastrophe in our Southern states; budgets for flood control, strengthening the levees, evacuation, and relief have been inadequate and have actually been reduced, while we are spending billions of dollars to invade other countries.

That's no secrets that domestically, "War Against terror" is in fact oppressions against immigrant and the people of color communities. Understanding the connections between our individual conditions of life and the lives of people everywhere in the World allows us to come together and organize across all borders. WE NEED to link the connections between: wars in Africa, south America, Asia, Iraq, Palestine & Korea with sweatshops in Asia as well as in Los Angeles, New York; international arm sales and WTO, FTAA, NAFTA & CAFTA with AIDS, hunger, child labors and child soldier; multinational corporations & economic exploitation with racism & poverty at home—then we can win the struggle.

It's the time anti-globalization, peace and social justice activists need to spend their time focusing the community struggles where we lives. THINK GLOBALLY, ACT LOCALLY!

IMMIGRANT SOLIDARITY NETWORK CALLS FOR IMMIGRANTS FOR PEACE & JUSTICE CAMPAIGNS

The immigrant communities had increasingly become one of the fastest growing targets for the U.S. military recruiters. With the "promises" of citizenships and show your "patriotism," many new comers were tricked to join the army to fight the unjust wars of Afghanistan and Iraq. Many injured even killed.

Some 37,000 men and women - or about 3 percent of the total active duty force - are non-citizens, up from 28,000 five years ago. Many immigrants enter the military in the hopes it will speed up citizenship applications. Many, however, only become full-fledged Americans only after their deaths at the combats. Currently, at least several dozen new immigrants killed in Iraq and Afghanistan before they achieve their American dreams.

We are calling for a national formation of immigrant counter-recruitment coalition, to link military recruitment with the "promises" of citizenships. The U.S. citizenships should not become the exchange tools for the government to lure new immigrants who are desperately need documented in this country. No Killing for Citizenships as part of the growing national counter-recruitment campaigns and immigrant-based anti-war movements.

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National Immigrant Solidarity Network is the member organizations of United for Peace & Justice, Asian Pacific American Labor Alliance –L.A. Chapter and Latin American Solidarity Coalition.

Minutemen Watch

Please Visit our Minutemen Watch Webpage!

URL: <http://www.immigrantsolidarity.org/Campaigns/Minutemen.htm>

Minutemen Conflicts Intensifying

Frontera NorteSur (FNS)

Center for Latin American and Border Studies, New Mexico State University (Las Cruces, New Mexico)

The Border Battle of 2005 is heating up again. From California to Texas, the self-styled Minutemen and their opponents are gearing up for a fall offensive along the US- Mexico border. In the California-Baja California corridor, three Minutemen organizations were set to deploy their members on the border beginning this week and extending into October.

In Texas, meanwhile, Minutemen cited the dispatching of some United States Patrol Border agents to the Hurricane Katrina disaster zone as justification for moving up a planned October mobilization to this month.

"The government has come up with a reason for the Border Patrol to be placed in Louisiana, completely obliterating and demolishing all the efforts of the Border Patrol on the borders," charged Al Garza, the president of the Minuteman Civil Defense Corps of Texas.

Like other Minutemen organizations, Garza's group maintained it's civilian observation activities are solely meant to help the federal government control illegal activity along the border. Minutemen opponents accuse the groups of serving as covers for racist and violent elements, charges frequently denied by various Minutemen spokespersons. Recent investigations by the Alabama-based Southern Poverty Law Center and others contended white supremacists have an important presence in the movement.

The appearance of the Minutemen has sparked a far-flung, broad counter-mobilization of immigrant and Latino rights organizations on both sides of the border and beyond. Ranging from the mainstream League of United Latin American Citizens to the Chicano nationalist Brown Berets, a variety of organizations are convening demonstrations, promoting local government resolutions and, in the case of the United for Human Dignity Boycott Arizona Coalition, advocating for a possible, cross-border boycott of businesses and government entities in Arizona deemed immigrant unfriendly.

Meeting in Mexico City last spring, immigrant and human rights associations from Colombia, Peru, Ecuador, Chile, Spain, and Mexico signed a joint declaration with US immigrant advocates opposing the Minutemen. In California and Baja California, dozens of organizations are endorsing anti-Minutemen press conferences, vigils and rallies scheduled for September 15-17 in Mexicali/Calexico, San Diego, San Jose, Oakland, and Sacramento. Demonstrations against the Minutemen and current US immigration policies are likewise on the agenda for the El Paso-Ciudad Juarez-Las Cruces region and Houston on October 8.

In Texas' Lower Rio Grande Valley, a social justice group from a Roman Catholic parish launched this month a "white ribbon campaign" to counter the arrival of the Minutemen. "There's got to be a more sensible way of dealing with this (illegal immigration) than what we've done-but Minutemen is not the solution," said Father Michael Seifert of the San Felipe de Jesus Church in Cameron Park near Brownsville.

Employing another tactic, Minutemen opponents are increasingly making their voices heard in local government and state governments. On August 15, the Laredo City Council passed a resolution stating its disapproval of individuals and groups assisting the federal government in enforcing immigration laws and encouraging landowners in Webb County or Laredo to decline requests from people wanting to use their land for border patrolling activities. A similar resolution was passed last month by the El Paso City Council.

A majority of city councilors in Brownsville recently indicated in an informal poll that they too would support an anti-Minutemen resolution. The sentiment is shared by the city's mayor, Eddie Trevino, Jr. "I would most definitely support a resolution," Mayor Trevino said. Gathered in Tijuana late last month, the 11th Border Legislative Conference, a grouping made up of border state legislators from Mexico and the United States, demanded that only trained personnel be allowed to observe the border. Because the resolution did not take a stand against illegal immigration, the Arizona state delegation voted against it.

Minutemen leaders are publicly defiant of the resolutions and demonstrations targeting their movement. Commenting on the El Paso anti-Minutemen vote, Al Garza said the resolution should be thrown in the trash. Saying the majority of his members were combat veterans who know their rights, Garza added, "We are all Americans and we have the Constitutional right to assemble. (Minuteman opponents) are breaking the law and committing a federal offense."

On Saturday, September 17 groups and individuals from across Southern California are caravanning to Calexico to stop the minutemen.

CALEXICO, CA--Hundreds of people from across California will converge at the International Border Park, First and Paulin Streets inn Calexico on Saturday, September 17 at 5:00 p.m. to rally and march against the presence of vigilante minutemen on the California border.

Beginning at East Los Angeles College at 11:00 a.m., La Tierra es de Todos will convoy to Calexico in cars and passenger vans. The Bay Area Coalition to Fight the Minutemen has chartered two buses to transport people from the San Francisco area. Gente Unida and The o.r.g.a.n.i.c. Collective from San Diego will also caravanning to Calexico, where opponents of the minutemen will meet up with Calexico residents in a joint protest with residents of Mexicali across the border.

Last week, the Calexico City Council unanimously passed a resolution condemning civilian border patrol groups. "They are not needed here," Alex Perrone, the mayor of Calexico, elaborated. "If they come, I am going to tell these minutemen and Friends of the Border Patrol, 'Go there to New Orleans. Show you're patriotic and help your fellow man.'"

The Mexican press routinely refers to the armed civilian groups collectively calling themselves minutemen as "cazamigrantes," or migrant hunters. Since April, the migrant hunters have taken up positions along the border to assist the U.S. Border Patrol in arresting and detaining border crossers.

The appearance of the minutemen has sparked a broad mobilization of migrant and Latino rights organizations on both sides of the border. Ranging from the mainstream League of United Latin American Citizens to the Chicano Brown Berets, organizations are convening demonstrations throughout California, Arizona, and Texas, promoting local government resolutions and calling for cross-border boycotts. Meeting in Mexico City last spring, immigrant and human rights associations from Colombia, Peru, Ecuador, Chile, Spain, and Mexico signed a joint declaration with US migrant advocates opposing the minutemen.

In July, even as they flouted rifles, shotguns, and sidearms, the civilian California Border Patrol was roused by opponents from Campo, where "rogue" minutemen shot and wounded two migrants. CPB returned to the border on September 11 to replace the one hundred U.S. Border Patrol agents dispatched to New Orleans.

Opponents of the minutemen timed their protest in Calexico to coordinate with the arrival of Friends of the Border Patrol. Andy Ramirez, who headed the Proposition 187 Save Our State effort, organized this newest anti-migrant group. Ron Prince, co-author of Prop 187, chairs FBP.

Since the beginning of the minuteman patrols in Arizona last April, the minutemen have been plagued with smaller than anticipated turnout and large crowds of opponents demanding the minutemen "go home."

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U.S. – Mexico Border Migrant Deaths, August 15-31
Sean Garcia: Latin America Working Group

In the last two weeks of August, 27 people died trying to enter the United States. The majority of these deaths occurred in Texas, with Arizona placing second for migrant deaths. Already, 2005 has become the deadliest year on record, with 385 recorded deaths to date – surpassing the previous record of 383 set in 2000. Below are a few of the victims' stories.

August 17: A group of migrants are apprehended by Border Patrol and tell agents about a body they passed on their journey. An unidentified body is found dead under a tree in the Welton Stations Area of Operations in Yuma, Arizona.

August 19: U.S. Fish and Wildlife Biologists find a unidentified body dead from heat related illness near Yuma, Arizona.

August 20: A rancher near Tucson, Arizona, finds a dead body. The cause of death appeared to be dehydration, but the age and sex of the victim could not be determined.

August 21: The body of an adult male is found dead east of Why, Arizona.

August 21: The body of a man is found dead in the San Diego Sector of California. The cause of death is still pending.

August 22: The body of a male is found dead in the San Diego Sector of California. The cause of death is still pending.

August 24: The skeletal remains of an identified body are found in the Del Rio Sector of Texas.

August 25: An adult male is found dead from heat exposure 25 miles northwest of Laredo, Texas.

August 25: The body of an adult male is discovered south of Little Tucson, Arizona.

August 25: The body of a man is discovered 7 miles outside of Laredo, Texas. The probable cause of death is heat exposure.

August 25: A man, who died from heat exposure, is found 40 miles outside of Laredo, Texas.

August 25: A man is discovered dead 28 miles outside of Laredo, Texas by Border Patrol.

August 26: A dead man is found around 10 a.m. near Yuma, Arizona. The man was carrying Mexican identification.

August 26: Police discover the body of a deceased man near Yuma, Arizona. The man was carrying Mexican identification.

August 26: Border Patrol find the body of a dead man in the Barry M. Goldwater Air Force Range in Arizona.

August 27: A woman is found dead in Deming, New Mexico off of Highway 9.

August 28: A man's body is discovered on the Tohono O'odham Indian Reservation in Arizona.

August 29: A migrant apprehended by Border Patrol, tell agents about the group of 4 he left in the desert. Border Patrol back tracked the journey and found 3 still alive and 1 woman who had died in the Cargo Muchacho Mountains in California.

August 29: An unknown body is discovered outside of Hebbbronville, Texas. The cause of death is severe heat exposure and dehydration.

August 29: The body of a man is found by Border Patrol 17 miles west of Hebbbronville, which is 40 miles east of Laredo, Texas.

August 30: Another unknown victim is discovered in Bruni, located 40 miles east of Laredo, Texas.

August 30: The skeletal remains of a man who fell from a train near Fort Hancock weeks ago are found.

August 30: A Yuma woman discovers the body of an unidentified woman in an abandoned horse trailer located at Avenue 3½ E and County 21st Street in Yuma, Arizona. The woman appeared to be dead for several weeks.

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DREAM Watch
News and Analysis about the DREAM Act and the Struggle for Immigrant Students

Immigrant Tuition Analysis
Policy Research Institute for the Region (Princeton University), Summer 2005

Earlier this summer, 300 college students and would-be students gathered outside the Philadelphia Convention Center for an unconventional pep rally. They were attending the annual meeting of the National Council of La Raza, a Hispanic civil rights group, and were joined by members of the Pennsylvania Immigration and Citizenship Coalition. They had abandoned the air-conditioned comfort of the convention center to publicize legislation that would permit undocumented residents to pay in-state resident tuition at public colleges and universities.

The Urban Institute estimates that approximately 607,000 unauthorized immigrants currently attend K-12 schools in the U.S. Some have lived here for as long as they can remember. Anywhere from 50,000 to 65,000 of these undocumented students graduate from U.S. high schools yearly. Like their native-born classmates, many aspire to enter college.

Today however, all but nine states deny undocumented students the in-state tuition discounts that can make college affordable for many who lack the means to pay more. Exacerbating matters, undocumented students cannot qualify for financial aid.

Federal legislation introduced in 2003 would help undocumented youth clear the barriers to higher education. With bipartisan support, the Development, Relief and Education for Alien Minors (DREAM) Act and the Student Adjustment Act would offer qualified youth conditional legal status and the possibility of a "green card" after six years. States would be free to determine residency policies for tuition purposes with the repeal of a section of the 1996 Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act that required states to extend to all citizens any benefit accorded undocumented immigrants.

But the legislation has not come close to passage, caught up in national security fears and the quagmire over immigration policy generally. Some of the bill's co-sponsors, which include all four senators from New York and from New Jersey, and Sen. Arlen Specter of Pennsylvania, have vowed to push the matter in this session of Congress.

Stalled at the federal level, the fight has shifted to the states. At one extreme are states like Alaska and Arizona that have considered legislation to prevent undocumented students from paying resident tuition. The Virginia legislature approved such a bill, but the governor used his veto to thwart it. Supporters of that position say tuition extension bills reward illegal behavior.

And they object to any "illegal" immigrant receiving a benefit unavailable to a U.S. citizen. With the costs of college skyrocketing, they argue, all families are harder pressed to send their children to college, and the slots at public universities have become more coveted.

Supporters of the in-state tuition policy look to California, Illinois, Kansas, New Mexico, New York, Oklahoma, Texas, Utah and Washington: the nine states (among more than 20 to have considered such legislation) where it is law. In several cases, including New York, the provisions were backed by broad coalitions of both parties, as well as businesses, unions, educators and the civil rights community.

If proponents see New York as a beacon, for undocumented immigrant students, it has hardly been smooth sailing. In 1989, the State University of New York (SUNY) and the City University of New York (CUNY), complied with an executive order that freed the schools to charge undocumented residents in-state rates. But after the Sept. 11, 2001 attacks, the state revoked the policy, citing the federal 1996 Illegal Immigration Reform and Responsibility Act.

CUNY became the center of the ensuing maelstrom, as thousands of students balked at a 100 percent tuition increase. With a student body from 145 countries and speaking more than 100 languages, CUNY is one of the most ethnically and racially diverse universities in the country. Students and faculty staged a hunger strike, and the administration came under strong criticism. The following year, Gov. George Pataki helped reinstate the previous policy, describing the move as integral to "reinforce New York's proud legacy as a bastion of hope and opportunity by providing access to a high-quality, affordable higher education for hard-working immigrants."

For the 3,000 undocumented students enrolled at the branches of CUNY's senior colleges last year, the benefit is substantial. Those who grew up in the Empire State will pay \$3,200 next year compared with the \$6,800 tab for non-residents.

Students whose guardians settled in New Jersey face a more costly future. As a recent New York Times article on the subject pointed out, undocumented students in the state get mixed messages about the value of their education. The Times reported that last year the state funded bilingual programs for 342,482 high school students and by law school officials cannot question students' immigration status. But they are not allowed to pay in-state tuition at New Jersey's state colleges and universities.

Legislation to change their status has languished. Many opponents cite financial concerns. Assuming that some of the immigrant students who would enroll as residents under the proposal would otherwise pay full tuition or else take places that might be occupied by full-tuition applicants, the proposal would further strain an already financially strapped system.

Residents attending Rutgers University this fall will pay \$7,336 in tuition. Students who do not meet the residency and citizenship requirements will pay almost double. If the state had to pay the difference, critics say, it could cost up to \$5 million a year.

Supporters urge the longer view. Paving the way for immigrant students to attend college would boost state's economy, they argue, since an educated workforce is a magnet for business investment. Moreover, no matter what their immigration status, college graduates earn more money and pay more in state taxes. The current policy is also problematic from a civil rights perspective, they contend, since it disproportionately hurts the state's Hispanic youth. Census data show that Latino children are among the fastest-growing segments in the United States.

Others, like State Senator Shirley Turner, express ambivalence over what they see as a potential conflict with the 1996 federal law. But a federal judge recently dismissed a lawsuit filed on these grounds by out-of-state students at the University of Kansas, leaving the state's tuition law intact.

Finally, there is Pennsylvania. Like New Jersey, it experienced a dramatic increase in "illegal" immigration during the 1990s. But despite strong support from organizations like the Pennsylvania Immigration and Citizenship Coalition, legislators have not sponsored any measure to grant in-state tuition to undocumented youth.

In her address to the Philadelphia gathering of La Raza, Blanca Cabrera, an undocumented National Merit Scholar, framed the issue this way. "We are not asking for any special treatment. We are only asking for the same right to go on and complete a higher education."

With fervent feeling on both sides, the issue is likely to resurface in the headlines of the region and the nation.

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Special Report: Impacts of Hurricane Katrina to the Immigrant Communities

No Assurances for Undocumented Immigrants ("Illegals") Seeking Hurricane Relief By SUZANNE GAMBOA, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (Sept. 10) - The Department of Homeland Security has stopped short of reassuring illegal immigrants victimized by Hurricane Katrina that they can seek help from relief agencies without fear of arrest - a promise the federal government made after the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks.

Spokeswoman Joanna Gonzalez refused to directly answer repeated questions about whether the agency can assure illegal immigrants that their information would not be turned over to law enforcement agencies when they seek help.

"We want to provide food, water, shelter and medical supplies to everyone. No one should be afraid to accept our offers to provide safety," Gonzalez said in an e-mail message.

Rescuers have not been asking people whether they are in the country legally when they are rescuing them, she said.

Asked several times Thursday for an update to her response, Gonzalez said there were no updates.

Border Patrol and Immigration and Customs Enforcement officials were assisting in the hurricane response and helping to find survivors.

Ten days after the Sept. 11 attacks four years ago, then-immigration chief James Ziglar issued a statement encouraging undocumented immigrants who thought they had lost friends or family in the World Trade Center to contact local authorities. He said they could do so without fear authorities would try to get their information for immigration purposes. He repeated the statement in a New York news conference a few weeks later.

Mexican President Vicente Fox said the United States had agreed with his request not to prosecute undocumented Mexican migrants affected by Katrina and who turned to U.S. officials for help.

Gonzalez could not confirm whether Homeland Security was included in that agreement. The State Department said immigration enforcement was Homeland Security's jurisdiction.

Gonzalez said Homeland Security had been on Spanish-language television and radio to let immigrants know "we are not going to ask you who you are or what you are because our priority is to save lives."

Latin American nations have been trying to locate citizens affected by Katrina, and said they were worried illegal immigrants may not seek help for fear of being deported. Tens of thousands of Latin Americans, most from Mexico and Honduras, had been living in the New Orleans area.

Citizenship and Immigration Services was planning to naturalize five hurricane victims who were previously scheduled to become citizens but whose swearing in was canceled because of Katrina. The five will be naturalized Thursday in Memphis, Tennessee, where New Orleans operations have moved, CIS spokesman Bill Strassberger said.

CIS canceled seven naturalization ceremonies scheduled for this month in New Orleans, and would not plan any more there for awhile.

The agency said its New Orleans files were not damaged, but two New Orleans staff members were missing.

People who had immigration applications or other paperwork pending at the New Orleans office can go to any of the agency's other offices in the country to replace documents or complete applications, Strassberger said.

Foreign Workers Are Caught in a Double Trap

By IAN URBINA

New York Times

September 6, 2005

BILOXI, Miss., Sept. 5 - Like so many other people here, Pedro, a landscaper from Chiapas, Mexico, is desperately trying to get out of Biloxi. He wants to take his wife, Anna, who is eight months pregnant, someplace cleaner and safer, wherever that might be.

But aside from being low on gas like everyone else, Pedro, who would not give his last name because he is undocumented, is nervous about traveling in a city swarming with police officers and National Guard troops.

Bran Dize, a prep cook from Spanish Town, Jamaica, near Kingston, worries that Hurricane Katrina may suddenly have made him an illegal immigrant because, he said, his guest worker visa requires him to work at a casino - the Beau Rivage - that, for all practical purposes, no longer exists.

Hurricane Katrina has left its victims feeling vulnerable and uncertain, but for many noncitizens trapped here, the anxiety is especially acute because they worry that they will jeopardize their legal status if they try to leave.

There are worries, too, about those who may not have survived the storm. The Mexican government has opened two mobile consulates in the affected areas, one in Mobile, Ala., and the other in Baton Rouge, La., to begin looking for tens of thousands of their citizens reported missing. The authorities in Mexico estimated that 145,000 Mexicans live in the area.

At a tense meeting on Friday with immigration officials from the Jamaican government, a group of about 40 Jamaican guest workers from the Grand Casino, the Beau Rivage and the Casino Magic fired a battery of tough questions.

"Will we get paid for the remaining three months left in our contracts?" one woman asked from the back of the crowd gathered at the Fairview apartments here. "We don't have plane tickets back to Jamaica," another said. "Who will pay for these?"

Solid answers were in short supply. "I'm looking into this right now, but you have to be patient," said Barbara Dacosia, who oversees the 950 or so Jamaicans who work in casinos along the Gulf Coast in a nine-month guest worker program. "We're going to do some practical things, and we're going to do some tropical things, and that means we're going to pray."

Much like these immigrants, the city of Biloxi, defined over the past century by its transient culture of summer vacationers, sailors and gamblers, is at a standstill. Boats have been washed ashore. The number of visitors has dropped to zero from 10 million a year. The floating casinos have sunk. And movement is difficult.

"We tried to get gas, but when we got to the counter with our container, the man waved his hand and said no," Pedro, the Mexican landscaper, said in Spanish. "We couldn't say anything because we thought he might get mad and call the police."

José, also a Chiapas native who did not want to give his last name because he is undocumented, said that the only people he knew outside of Biloxi lived in Denver. But aside from having less than \$20 left, he said he was also unsure whether he could make it that far without getting caught by the immigration authorities.

Like the many immigrants who came to the area as cheap labor to help rebuild Biloxi after Hurricane Ivan, José arrived in the area in September 2004 looking for contract work. "If I get a chance to get out of here, I'm going," he said. "This is all I know."

Ian Nelson, a Jamaican guest worker who for the last six months had been a housekeeper for the Grand Casino, said he would also rather not stay in the country. But as the only source of income for his parents in Jamaica, Mr. Nelson said he hoped the casino would find work for him in another state.

"I doubt they are going to help us," he said, "because no one from the company has even checked to see if their workers who are stranded here are O.K." About 344 Jamaican guest workers were in Biloxi, based at the three casinos in the city, said Ms.

Dacosia, the chief liaison for the Jamaican Central Labor Organization. It is not clear whether they will be returned home without pay or placed in other jobs, she said.

Mr. Nelson said he had never felt more trapped in his life.

"I have come and gone under the work program for the past four years and never had troubles with the program," he said. "But I paid for my own plane ticket and now I am here and I don't know if I will get the work and money that I was promised."

September 20 Washington D.C: Legislative Action

Immigration Reform: The Secure America and Orderly Immigration Act of 2005 provides a path to citizenship and reunites families. It is a bipartisan bill sponsored by Senators McCain and Kennedy, who have both been invited to a National Town Hall and Rally for Real Immigration Reform to be held:

National Town Hall on Immigration Reform
Tuesday, September 20, 2005, at 4 pm
Foundry United Methodist Church,
1500 16th St. NW, Washington, DC 20036

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About National Immigrant Solidarity Network

ISN 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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