

Immigration Root Causes Advocacy Sign-On Letter

August, 2006

Dear Decision Makers, Social Justice Advocates and Workers,

Having studied the root causes of high levels of immigration to the U.S. in recent years, the undersigned individuals and organizations are hereby expressing our common analysis of the situation, with the hope that we can move towards a viable solution to this growing controversy and conflict.

Considering that there is a high correlation between economic and trade policies emanating from the Washington Consensus, (including treaties such as NAFTA and CAFTA and agreements imposed under the WTO, as well as arm-twisting to impose onerous structural adjustments by the IMF and WB) and high levels of undocumented migration to the U.S.,

Considering that much current migration to the U.S. from Mexico, Central and South America and even from impoverished countries in Asia and Africa are indeed forms of 'forced migration' to the degree that migrants are trying to resolve situations of endemic hunger and deprivation and to maintain their human dignity,

Considering that NAFTA (since 1994) and WTO minimum import quotas (since 1995) have allowed the dumping of U.S. (and European) agricultural commodities such as corn, soybeans, milk, etc... onto the markets of Mexico, Central America and other developing countries, destroying livelihoods of small farmers, pushing most notably Mexican corn farmers to emigrate from their communities in search of a living,

Considering that US farm policy such as the US 2002 Farm Bill, in particular due to its increase in already expensive commodity and export subsidy payments, maintains a system of overproduction and historically low prices of these food commodities, culminating in the rapid loss of small and medium scale family farms while enriching the export, chemical and seed input and confinement agriculture corporations who have attained virtual monopoly control over their respective markets,

Considering that this cheap food policy has resulted in the disappearance of all but 1.7 million people who continue to farm (mostly at a loss) in the U.S.,

Considering that the Republican-dominated US House of Representatives opposes comprehensive immigration reform and instead proposes a plan of outright criminalization of undocumented workers or US citizens or residents who attempt to help those impoverished and vulnerable individuals (under the so-called Sensenbrenner Bill of 2006),

Considering that the US is a country built by immigrants, most of whom arrived on these shores without legal documents or in an abhorrent system of chattel slavery,

Considering the internal contradictions between the economic policies imposed in undemocratic closed-door negotiations, utilizing secretive hearings such as the NAFTA tribunals to resolve disagreements, and the attempt to criminalize the victims of those policies for their migration to the US in search of sustenance for themselves and their families,

Considering our insistence that all human beings have inalienable rights and are ensured the full measure of human dignity,

Therefore:

We strongly call for a cessation of blame towards undocumented immigrants for coming to the US, for a cessation of measures aimed to criminalize and deport immigrants, for attempts to militarize the border and to extend the walls between the US and Mexico, for raids of businesses that punish undocumented workers, for a cessation of the construction of large detention camps to facilitate mass deportations.

We call for a transformation of the economic and trade policies of the US and of the upcoming US Farm Bill 2007, to undo the economic harm from past policies, for removing agriculture clauses from NAFTA and CAFTA and for abandoning the repeated attempts to impose deeper trade liberalization of agricultural commodities through the WTO,

We call for policies which favor rural development and economic viability, that do not slant the playing field in favor of agribusiness and against family farmers, policies that help young people to go into farming, that favor the restoration of local agricultural economies, that conserve the soil and waters in our rural areas. We propose the principle of food sovereignty, or the right of farmers in their respective countries and regions to provide for their people's sustenance as they see fit and to limit commodity dumping.

We call for dramatically raising the minimum wage in the U.S. and for the legal right of all workers (including farm workers and domestic workers) to organize themselves and exert social and economic pressure upon employers in order to improve their working conditions and benefits. We call for justice, dignity and a living wage for all workers who provide for ours and their food, housing and care.

For Justice,

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