

2007-2008 Immigration Update 6

April 1, 2008

Small Grants for Teaching About Immigration Available

The American Immigration Law Foundation is offering grants of up to \$500 to K-12 teachers who implement projects on immigration and immigrants. According to the AILF website, "The Foundation seeks to fund activities that are innovative and supportive of AILF's mission of promoting the benefits of immigrants to our nation." The foundation is especially interested in projects that relate to use of technology, underrepresented minorities, community outreach and partnerships with community-based organizations, and math and science. The deadline for applications is June 1, 2008. Learn more at <http://www.ailf.org/teach/grants.shtml>.

Survey in Sixth Congressional District Surprises

In the district where candidates are vying to replace Congressman Tom Tancredo, a recent poll of Republican and independent voters revealed that they do not necessarily support their current representative's views on immigration. According to a March 13 article in the Denver Post, which obtained a copy of the Republican-sponsored poll, voters in the district "overwhelmingly support a guest worker program, reject the idea that most illegal immigrants should be deported, and even support the idea of amnesty." According to the *Post*, the poll results are being discussed nationally, perhaps shaping how Republicans will address immigration in the upcoming campaign. For the complete *Post* article, see http://www.denverpost.com/search/ci_8552360.

Number of Unauthorized Migrants Turned Over to Federal Authorities in Colorado Declines

Colorado law enforcement agencies turned over the names of fewer suspected unauthorized migrants to federal agencies last year than in the previous year. Burt Hubbard of the *Rocky Mountain News* compared referrals by Colorado law enforcement month by month because information was available only for the last seven months of 2006 (following passage of a new Colorado law requiring that law enforcement notify Immigration and Customs Enforcement when they detain or stop someone suspected of being in the country illegally [except traffic stops and domestic violence cases prior to resolution]). Hubbard found that most jurisdictions showed declines. The size of the declines varied considerably; for example, Douglas County showed a 10 percent decline, while Arapahoe County showed a whopping 79 percent decline. A few jurisdictions, including Adams County, Aurora, and Weld County showed increases.

State officials and local law enforcement agencies suggested a variety of reasons for the decline—improved enforcement, employer sanctions, the downturn in the economy, and enhanced efforts to fight human trafficking.

Hubbard also noted that while Colorado did refer 16,000 names to ICE in 2007, the federal agency placed few automatic deportation holds on the individuals reported. The deportation holds are executed after a person, if found guilty of the offense for which they were arrested, serves a jail sentence for that offense.

To read Hubbard's article in its entirety, go to <http://www.rockymountainnews.com/news/2008/mar/22/reporting-of-illegals-down/>.

Creative Sentencing: Learn English or Go to Jail

A county judge in Pennsylvania, known for "creative sentencing," recently required four Spanish-speaking men, ages 17 to 22, to learn English in the next year or face a two-year jail term. Judge Peter Paul Olszewski, Jr., said the unusual ruling was not intended as a punishment: "There's no way young kids can be hurt by knowing how to read and write the English language. It's a means to helping them get a better education, getting a better job."

The four defendants, legal residents of the United States, pleaded guilty to conspiracy to commit robbery. The four must return to court in a year and pass a test that convinces the judge they have learned English. The attorney for one of the defendants expressed some support for the unusual sentence, saying "My client is happy. I think it's going to help him." At the same time, the attorney, Ferris Webby, said he was researching a possible appeal. Attorneys at the ACLU of Pennsylvania expressed concern about the vagueness of the order and the possibility that the "learn English" requirement reinforces stereotypes about immigrants and crime.

For more information, see the *Philadelphia Inquirer* story at: http://www.philly.com/inquirer/home_region/20080328_Judge_tells_defendants_Learn_English_4_Spanish-speaking_Hazleton_men_must_pass_a_test_to_avoid_jail_time_.html

Mexico's First Lady Concerned About Immigrant Children

Mexico's First Lady, Margarita Zavala, spoke at a luncheon fund-raiser for Project C.U.R.E. in Denver on March 5. Her goal in the speech was to raise awareness of the many Mexican children who cross the U.S. border alone or are separated in the process. She reported that the United States

returns about 50,000 children to Mexico each year, including about 22,000 who are not with their parents.

In her speech, Zavala recounted the story of a mother and her seven-year-old daughter who came into the United States together. However, when the group with whom they were traveling reached Arizona, the smugglers separated the adults and children, eventually leaving the children in a church. The mother searched for four months before finding her daughter.

Zavala stressed that her concern was not to "talk about immigration policy...This is about children."

A Spanish-language movie that has been getting attention at various film festivals, *Under the Same Moon (La Misma Luna)*, dramatizes the issue addressed by Zavala. It tells the story of a nine-year-old living with his grandmother in Mexico while his mother works in Los Angeles. When his grandmother dies, leaving him alone, he contacts a child smuggler to take him to the United States, where he tries to locate his mother. The film's opening weekend set a box office record for a Spanish-language film in the United States. The film is playing at a number of theaters in the Denver area.

Controversy Over "Hate Speech" in the Immigration Debate

A current debate about "hate speech" in the Immigration Debate is pitting the National Council of La Raza and the Southern Poverty Law Center against CNN, Fox News, and the Federation for American Immigration Reform.

One flashpoint for the controversy is the Southern Poverty Law Center's annual count of hate groups, which indicated that the number of such groups had risen from 602 in 2000 to 888 in 2007. One of the newly added groups is the Federation for American Immigration Reform (FAIR), which vehemently protested its characterization as a hate group. FAIR's president Dan Stein claimed that the Center's aim was to stifle debate that disagreed with its position: "Apparently you can't even articulate an argument for immigration reform without being smeared."

The report also posited a link between anti-immigrant activism and increased hate crimes directed against Latinos. FBI statistics indicate that the number of Latinos who were the victims of hate crimes grew from 595 in 2003 to 819 in 2006. FAIR argued that the Law Center's report exaggerates the influence of groups that are basically just websites and stirs up fear.

La Raza has referenced the Center's report in making an appeal to media, particularly cable networks CNN, Fox News, and MSNBC, to dial back the "hateful tone" of discussion about immigration. The incendiary language used by some commentators, La Raza president Janet Murguía claims, contributes to the increase in hate crimes. Fox News issued a statement defending itself, while CNN met with La Raza and MSNBC planned to meet with the civil rights group.

The Southern Poverty Law Center's report *The Year in Hate* is available at <http://www.splcenter.org/intel/intelreport/intrep.jsp?iid=44>. Information on La Raza's efforts to moderate the language used in the debate can be found at http://www.nclr.org/section/wave_of_hope/. FAIR responses can be found at http://www.fairus.org/site/PageServer?pagename=media_release3102008 and http://www.fairus.org/site/PageServer?pagename=leg_alert030308.

Readings and Resources

The following are some new resources on immigration:

- *Generations of Exclusion: Mexican Americans, Assimilation, and Race*, by Edward Telles and Vilma Ortiz (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 2008) is a unique work. During a library remodel at UCLA, workers came across files containing results of a survey of Mexican migrants in the United States conducted in 1965. Sociologists Telles and Ortiz tracked down and interviewed many of the original respondents, as well as their descendants. Thus, the book provides a 35-year time-lapse perspective on Mexican-American families. Some of the findings present a positive view (nearly everyone spoke English by the second generation; they also retained their Spanish); other findings are more troubling (Mexican-American neighborhoods are more segregated today than in the 1960s; high school graduation rates dipped slightly between first and fourth generations).
- *Ex Mex: Mexicans in the U.S., from Migrants to Immigrants*, by Jorge G. Castañeda (New York: New Press, 2008). As Mexico's foreign minister in the Fox administration and a current political science professor at New York University, Castañeda provides a fresh view on immigration and its effects on the United States, Mexico, and the relationship between the two nations. Of particular note is his insider's perspective on negotiations between the Bush and Fox administrations in the early 2000s.
- "An Immigrant's Silent Struggle, by Robert Kosi Tette, *Newsweek* (March 10, 2008). This My Turn essay examines the author's emotions upon returning to Ghana for a visit after living in the United States. Tette reflects on how the thought of returning home someday afforded "unusual endurance" in dealing with the challenges of living in the United States. The loss of that vision necessitated rethinking his "cultural dichotomy" and his "marathon life" as an engineer working in Detroit. A potentially interesting text for a Socratic seminar or civil conversation. Available online at <http://www.newsweek.com/id/117845>.