

2007-2008 IMMIGRATION UPDATE 3

December 30, 2007

ICE ARRESTS THREE IN GREELEY

On December 27, U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement announced that ICE agents, along with officers the Greeley Police Department, had arrested a gang member and two registered sex offenders in Greeley. The three were arrested as part of two major ICE operations.

The two sex offenders, a father and son, are both undocumented immigrants; the 67-year-old father had a 1989 conviction in California, the 33-year-old son had a 2003 conviction in Weld County. Both were apprehended under ICE's Operation Predator, a national initiative that "protects children by investigating and presenting for prosecution pedophiles, Internet predators, human traffickers, international sex tourists, and other predatory criminals." Operation Predator was launched in 2003 and has resulted in the arrest of more than 10,000 people and the deportation of more than 5,500. For recent ICE press releases regarding Operation Predator, see <http://www.ice.gov/pi/predator/newsreleases.htm>.

The third person arrested in Greeley was a 24-year-old member of the Norteno street gang, which operates in the Greeley area. According to ICE, his gang membership is documented with the Weld County Court system and the Greeley/Weld Police authorities. Although he is a U.S. permanent resident, criminal convictions (one felony conviction for menacing and two misdemeanor convictions, for child abuse and assault), make him eligible for deportation. This person was arrested under ICE's Operation Community Shield. Operation Community Shield is an "ongoing nationwide initiative in which ICE agents partner with other federal, state and local law enforcement agencies to address the public safety threat posed by transnational gangs." This initiative was launched in 2005 and has resulted in the arrest of more than 7,500 "street gang members and associates." An ICE fact sheet on Operation Community Shield is available on <http://www.ice.gov/pi/investigations/comshield/index.htm>.

All three men arrested in Greeley are currently in deportation proceedings.

TANCREDO ENDS CANDIDACY

Colorado Congressman Tom Tancredo ended his bid for the Republican presidential nomination on December 20. In ending his campaign, Tancredo said, "I fear remaining in this race, one which I cannot win, would contribute to the nomination of one of these candidates"—referring to former Arkansas governor Mike Huckabee and Senator John McCain, both of whom Tancredo sees as not tough enough. Huckabee's recent surge in the polls is one of the factors that Tancredo cited as influential in his decision. Tancredo threw his support to Mitt Romney, who he believes will take a hard-line approach to unauthorized immigration.

An MSNBC story (<http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/22346330/>) quoted Drake University political science professor Dennis Goldford, who said that Tancredo forced his GOP rivals to talk about immigration: "What Tancredo has done is analogous to what a third-party candidate does. They call attention to and articulate an issue that the other two main parties neglect or don't see" and then after forcing the issue they disappear.

Immigration had surged to the forefront of debate among the Republican candidates in late November, when the topic was the focus of the first half hour of the Republican YouTube debate. Romney and former New York mayor Rudy Giuliani sparred over the topic, each accusing the other of inappropriate actions related to immigration—Romney criticized Giuliani for making New York a "sanctuary city" while Giuliani retorted that Romney had employed unauthorized migrants in his home while governor of Massachusetts. Huckabee, meanwhile, argued that immigration and education policy should not "punish a child because the parent committed a crime."

PEW HISPANIC CENTER RELEASES STUDY ON ENGLISH LANGUAGE ABILITY

According to a new Pew Hispanic Center study, a large majority—91 percent—of Latinos born in the United States of immigrant parents describe themselves as fluent in English. In contrast, fewer than one-third of foreign-born Latino immigrants say they can speak English "very well" or "pretty well." While the study's co-author D'Vera Cohn, described the pattern of language acquisition across generations as similar to that of previous immigrant groups, a somewhat surprising finding was that 28 percent of immigrants say they speak only Spanish in the workplace.

Other study findings included the following:

- Language ability was the most-often-cited reason for discrimination against Latinos, mentioned more often than immigration status or such other factors as income, education, or skin color.
- Puerto Ricans and South Americans were most likely to report they are proficient in English, while Mexicans were least likely to say so.
- There is a strong correlation between an immigrant's level of education and reported fluency with English: 62 percent of those with college degrees said they were fluent, compared to 34 percent of those with a high school education and 11 percent of those who did not finish high school.

The report can be found at <http://pewhispanic.org/reports/report.php?ReportID=82>. Other recent reports from the Pew Hispanic Center include *2007 National Survey of Latinos: As Illegal Immigration Issue Heats Up, Hispanics Feel a Chill* (<http://pewhispanic.org/reports/report.php?ReportID=84>) and *Hispanics and the 2008 Election: A Swing Vote?* (<http://pewhispanic.org/reports/report.php?ReportID=83>).

MUSLIM IMMIGRANTS IN EUROPE RETAIN RELIGIOUS IDENTITY

Using British data, a German research institute has released a study suggesting that religious identity among Muslim immigrants in Europe is more persistent than religious identity among other ethnic and religious minorities. Factors that reinforced a strong Islamic identity included living in an integrated neighborhood, higher income, better job qualifications, and working in an environment where English is spoken. Factors that might be expected to weaken religious identity—time spent in Britain and level of education—did not. The study is of particular interest to Europeans because of the religious and cultural tensions experienced in the past several years and the intense debate over assimilation. The report (<http://www.docuticker.com/?p=15962>) and an interview with the report's primary author (<http://www.cepr.org/press/audio/DP6453/>) are both available online.

RECENT NPR REPORTS ON IMMIGRATION CITE INCREASE IN CUBAN IMMIGRATION AND EXAMINE REASONS FOR BECOMING U.S. CITIZENS

Since Fidel Castro temporarily turned over the reins of the Cuban government to his brother last year, immigration of Cubans to the United States is increasing. Surprisingly, many of the Cubans—a majority of those coming to the United States—are entering through Mexico. To avoid stepped-up Coast Guard patrols and the dangers of the sea voyage on flimsy vessels, Cubans are receiving permission to fly to Mexico. Because of the U.S. policy called "wet foot, dry foot," Cubans do not have to sneak across the border; Cubans who reach U.S. soil are generally allowed to stay in the country. Some Cubans are, however, smuggled across the border, reputedly with financing by Cuban-Americans. An NPR story on this rising tide of Cuban immigration is available at <http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=17611044>.

Another recent NPR report featured interviews with new U.S. citizens regarding why they decided to become citizens. Among their most important reasons are gaining the right to vote and the desire to feel accepted in the United States. An immigrant from Sierra Leone noted that he wanted to "vote so bad" in the last election, but he couldn't because he wasn't a citizen; now, he is happy he can participate in the process. Another immigrant from Mexico, spoke of the responsibility of being a U.S. citizen and his desire to take part in the "law-making" of the society. One immigrant from France said that, after becoming a citizen, he "felt complete." This report can be found at <http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=17600721>.

COLORADO MATTERS: IMMIGRATION

The Colorado Public Radio program *Colorado Matters* continues to provide frequent coverage of immigration issues. On December 10, host Ryan Warner reported on the problems faced by Colorado ski resorts due to the smaller number of H2B visas—visas to allow for international workers for seasonal work. For example, the Crested Butte resort had offered jobs to 225 workers from other countries but received

no H2B visas. Other resorts have experienced similar problems and are looking at a variety of solutions to the problem—busing in workers from communities where housing is more affordable and raising wages for some jobs, for example.

On December 12 and 13, *Colorado Matters* presented a two-part report on “One Year After the Greeley Immigration Raid.” The story included interviews with the Weld County District Attorney, the new and old mayors of Greeley, an immigrant advocate, an unauthorized immigrant detained in the raid, and the editor of the Greeley Tribune. The focus was “whether and how the raids changed the town.” Interviewees gave varied answers regarding the effects on the town, ranging from making Greeley safer, creating financial and other problems for families, and dividing the community.

All three of these reports are accessible at http://www.kcfr.org/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=94&Itemid=234&target_pg=com_day&date=12/15/2007.