

# Justice For Undocumented Workers:

## Reject HR 4437 and Guest Worker Programs!

### We Demand a Real Path to Citizenship!

**D**emocratic Socialists of America favors granting immediate permanent resident status to all undocumented workers and establishing an expeditious and non-punitive road to citizenship for these workers and their families. We oppose guest worker programs that would help exploit these workers and undercut all workers' rights to organize and to secure humane wages and working conditions, especially low-wage workers, many of whom are relegated to the bottom rung of the economy by institutional racism. The burgeoning immigrant rights movement represents a crucial movement for social justice and brings to the forefront of public debate issues central to a democratic and just society.

Legalizing the status of all immigrant workers and their families, as well as providing for a transparent and expeditious road to citizenship, embodies basic democratic socialist principles. First, those who are governed by the laws of a thorough-going democratic society would have a say in making such laws.

Second, all those who contribute meaningful labor to a democratic society, who care for our elderly, our children, and our disabled deserve full membership in our society.

Third, without full legal status, political rights, and a road to citizenship, immigrant workers cannot fight for rights on the job and can be ruthlessly exploited by employers. Threats of deportation for undocumented workers, as well as second-class status in guest worker programs, also restrict the capacity of workers to organize. These policies create a new form of indentured servitude and dependence.

As socialists, we know that "an injury to one is an injury to all." Thus, the vulnerability of undocumented and

guest workers leads not only to the exploitation of their labor, but to the proliferation of low-wage, unsafe, and insecure jobs for all. Employers can more easily discriminate against African-Americans, particularly young men, when there is vulnerable immigrant labor to exploit. Only strong enforcement of anti-discrimination and affirmative action laws, combined with the ability of all workers to unionize and fight for decent wage and working conditions, can yield a full-employment economy. The nativist arguments of the Minutemen and others displace anxiety about declining economic opportunities onto the very low-wage workers whose rights in the workplace must be secured if all working people are to improve their livelihoods. Therefore, Democratic Socialists of America militantly opposes HR 4437, the Sensenbrenner bill already passed in the House of Representatives. The proposed legislation, if adopted by Congress, would criminalize all undocumented workers and all who help them. It would lead to mass repression and a likely futile effort to deport 12 million undocumented workers and their families. Such an effort could be conducted only through massive violations of the civil liberties of citizens and legal residents, as well as the undocumented.

DSA also opposes devoting additional resources to militarizing our border. Since the passage of the restrictive 1994 Immigration Reform Act, the federal government has

This resolution was adopted by the National Political Committee of DSA in June 2006.

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spent more than \$30 billion on border enforcement. This has not deterred unauthorized border crossings. It has lined the pockets of “coyotes,” who serve the needs of exploitative employers searching for cheap labor, and has led to the cruel, painful deaths of some 4,000 people in the deserts of the Southwest and in the holds of ships.

We also endorse the expansion of opportunities for legal immigration and family unification, and the rapid processing of the backlog of pending visa applications.

While some bills before the Senate offer a path to citizenship for considerable numbers of undocumented workers, their provisions for guest worker programs and increased militarization of our borders violate the principles outlined above.

Further, as socialists we recognize that massive migrations of exploited workers, refugees, and asylum-seekers result from an unjust global political and economic system that works for the benefit of transnational corporations and at the expense of the world’s peoples. Immigration to the United States does not only result from the “pull” of greater economic opportunity. It is also caused by the “push” of growing economic inequality and exploitation in developing societies. The economic destiny of these countries is severely constrained by the power of transnational corporations and international institutions that regulate the global economy in their interests. Much of the mass migration of the past decade from Mexico and Central America is due to NAFTA and other unjust “free trade” agreements. Such agreements have enabled subsidized American agribusiness to flood these societies with cheap produce, thus destroying the livelihoods of millions of small farmers. The export-oriented, often capital-intensive form of manufacturing imposed by the IMF, World Bank, and the WTO on these nations also limits the number of good jobs in the urban economy of these developing nations. The same story can be told about African migration to the nations of the European Union.

In their inexorable search for cheap, exploitable wage labor, predominantly United States-owned transnational corporations have eliminated hundreds of thousands of

maquiladora jobs in Mexico and moved them to Vietnam and China, where even more repressive states make labor cheaper and more vulnerable still. Thus, the neo-liberal model of corporate globalization, which strives to maximize profitability through ruthless cost-cutting, succeeds

in impoverishing labor around the world. It is that impoverishment that drives workers in developing nations to reluctantly seek marginally better life opportunities in advanced industrial nations. Third world impoverishment, and not the influx of its workers, is the problem.

The “push” for mass immigration from the developing world can only be stemmed if these economies are allowed to develop in equitable and internally integrated

ways. Such development would require the national and international regulation of corporate power by free trade unions and democratic governments, as well as the democratization of international economic regulatory institutions. Only if the global economy is democratically controlled and structured in the interests of all the world’s peoples can we achieve full rights for working people in all societies.

Judging it by its goals, the immigrant rights movement is the civil rights movement of this generation. Its demand for labor rights for all points to the reality that social justice for working people around the globe can only be achieved through the extension of democratic and labor rights both at home and abroad. Only by building a truly internationalist labor and democratic political movement can we transition from a global capitalist world toward one that promotes economic and social justice.

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