

'YOUR PEOPLE SHALL BE MY PEOPLE' IMMIGRATION

PROPER 26, YEAR B

Lectionary Texts: Deuteronomy 6:1-9 Ruth 1:1-18 Psalms 146 & 119:1-8
Mark 12:28-34 Hebrews 9:11-14

Focus Text: Ruth 1:1-18

¹In the days when the judges ruled, there was a famine in the land, and a certain man of Bethlehem in Judah went to live in the country of Moab, he and his wife and two sons. ²The name of the man was Elimelech and the name of his wife Naomi, and the names of his two sons were Mahlon and Chilion; they were Ephrathites from Bethlehem in Judah. They went into the country of Moab and remained there. ³But Elimelech, the husband of Naomi, died, and she was left with her two sons. ⁴These took Moabite wives; the name of the one was Orpah and the name of the other Ruth. When they had lived there about ten years, ⁵both Mahlon and Chilion also died, so that the woman was left without her two sons and her husband. ⁶Then she started to return with her daughters-in-law from the country of Moab, for she had heard in the country of Moab that the LORD had considered his people and given them food. ⁷So she set out from the place where she had been living, she and her two daughters-in-law, and they went on their way to go back to the land of Judah. ⁸But Naomi said to her two daughters-in-law, "Go back each of you to your mother's house. May the LORD deal kindly with you, as you have dealt with the dead and with me. ⁹The LORD grant that you may find security, each of you in the house of your husband." Then she kissed them, and they wept aloud. ¹⁰They said to her, "No, we will return with you to your people." ¹¹But Naomi said, "Turn back, my daughters, why will you go with me? Do I still have sons in my womb that they may become your husbands? ¹²Turn back, my daughters, go your way, for I am too old to have a husband. Even if I thought there was hope for me, even if I should have a husband tonight and bear sons, ¹³would you then wait until they were grown? Would you then refrain from marrying? No, my daughters, it has been far more bitter for me than for you, because the hand of the LORD has turned against me." ¹⁴Then they wept aloud again. Orpah kissed her mother-in-law, but Ruth clung to her. ¹⁵So she said, "See, your sister-in-law has gone back to her people and to her gods; return after your sister-in-law." ¹⁶But Ruth said, "Do not press me to leave you or to turn back from following you! Where you go, I will go; Where you lodge, I will lodge; your people shall be my people, and your God my God. ¹⁷Where you die, I will die-- there will I be buried. May the LORD do thus and so to me, and more as well, if even death parts me from you!" ¹⁸When Naomi saw that she was determined to go with her, she said no more to her.

NRSV

ADDITIONAL TEXTS

When an alien* resides with you in your land, you shall not oppress the alien. The alien who resides with you shall be to you as the citizen among you; you shall love the alien as yourself, for you were aliens in the land of Egypt: I am the LORD your God.

Leviticus 19:33-34

Thus says the LORD: Act with justice and righteousness, and deliver from the hand of the oppressor anyone who has been robbed. And do no wrong or violence to the alien, the orphan, and the widow, or shed innocent blood in this place.

Jeremiah 22:3

* This word is also translated as "sojourner," "foreigner," or "immigrant."

SCRIPTURE COMMENTARY

The migration story is key to biblical ancestry. In the book of Ruth, one family is the focal point. It begins with Elimelech, his wife Naomi, and their two sons, who take Moabite wives, having to leave Judah and move to Moab because of a famine. Eventually all the men die, and the women are left alone. Naomi is a stranger in a strange land, who learns that there is no longer famine in Judah, so she exercises her right to return. However, she does not go alone. Ruth, her Moabite daughter-in-law, says, in Ruth 1:16, "Do not press me to leave you or to turn back from following you! Where you go, I will go; where you lodge, I will lodge; your people shall be my people, and your God my God!" The rest of the story is the story of Boaz adhering closely to God's requirement to offer hospitality to the stranger. He permits her to glean, protects her, and eventually marries her, bringing the sojourner into the fold and making her part of the family.

Fortunately for him, there were no I-130 family petitions to sign or other immigration regulations to make life difficult. Also, she did not have to leave the country for three to ten years before being allowed to return to begin life as his wife.

(From The Bible as the Ultimate Immigration Handbook: Written By, For, and About Migrants, Immigrants, Refugees, and Asylum Seekers by Rev. Joan M. Maruskin, Church World Service Immigration and Refugee Program, www.churchworldservice.org/immigration/bible-as-handbook.html)

PASTORAL REFLECTION

BY REV. ALICE KIRKMAN KUNKA
DIRECTOR, CORAZON

Have you ever "left home"? Most of us can relate in some way to the theme of "leaving home," perhaps to go away to school, enter the work force or to start a home of our own. Some people leave not only their home, but their home country. Some leave their homeland in search of a better life, or perhaps even for survival. As we hear the story of Naomi and Ruth, we learn that a famine in Judah has caused Naomi to leave the home of her birth to live in Moab, a country foreign to her. We can imagine that Naomi must have felt the hardship of learning to live in a new culture, learning a different language, and feeling like an outsider.

Over the years of living in this new land, Naomi's two sons take Moabite wives, Orpah and Ruth. With the death of Naomi's husband and ten years later the loss of her two sons as well, there must have seemed no reason to remain in this foreign land. So as Naomi prepares to make the trek back to her homeland, we can imagine her surprise when her daughter-in-law Ruth implores her to allow her to return with Naomi to Judah, even though Ruth is a Moabite, an ethnic group hated by those who thought of themselves as "people of God." Something about the God Naomi worshipped has captivated Ruth, and she is willing to give up her homeland to come to this new country, a place where she could well face rejection and be labeled a foreigner.

These two courageous women, each with her own circumstance, become aliens in a strange land. However, in Naomi's homeland, the legislation of the Torah governed the treatment of foreigners. Aliens were categorized along with widows and orphans, those who had no right to own land, and thus had no livelihood. These marginalized groups depended upon the generosity and concern of those who did have the means of production. The law required farmers to be less than one-hundred-percent efficient in their harvesting, leaving part of the crops in the field and thus allowing aliens, widows and orphans a means for survival.

Not only did the law give foreigners a way to survive with some measure of dignity, it commanded the people of Israel to treat aliens living in their midst as some of their own "native-born," admonishing them to "love them as yourself," and reminding them that they, too, were once foreigners in Egypt (Leviticus 19:34). Exodus 22:21-22 echoes this reminder of the time when all of Israel were aliens in Egypt, forbidding any mistreatment or oppression of aliens. Even though Ruth was not a native-born "citizen" of this adopted land, she was to be afforded certain protections under the law that ensured her survival.

Stories such as the one of Naomi and Ruth challenge us to consider how "aliens" are treated in these United States, the country whose Liberty Bell proudly displays the text, "Proclaim liberty throughout all the land to all the inhabitants thereof" (Leviticus 25:10).

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Recently I attended a day-long sensitivity training workshop. It was an excellent event, reflecting on what it means to be sensitive to differences in gender, culture, ethnicity, sexual orientation and race. One of the topics was “white privilege,” which has been defined by Dr. Peggy McIntosh of the Wellesley College Center for Research on Women as “unearned advantages —privileges that ease life and progress for those who are white Americans, and that impede life changes for those who are people of color.” “White privilege” continues to be a very important and necessary reflection. It was during our discussion about “white privilege” that I came to think about another privilege that was not included in our workshop, but perhaps should have been: “U.S. citizenship privilege”.

Working on a daily basis with many Latinos who are in North Carolina without documentation, I have become more and more aware of the privileges granted to U.S. citizens. Because many people categorize undocumented immigrants as law-breakers who have entered the U.S. illegally, it somehow makes it “okay” to discriminate against them. After all, why don’t they just stay in their own country? Like Naomi who left her homeland because of famine, many are forced from their native country for economic survival. Even so, why do they enter illegally? Can’t they just go get the proper documentation and enter legally?

What many of us fail to realize is how unjust U.S. immigration laws are, and how in many cases it is impossible for those who want to come to the U.S. to enter legally. Except for individuals who enter as farm workers under the H2A program, it is very difficult for an immigrant with less than a college degree to be granted a work visa. As U.S. citizens, our experience of going to a foreign country is very different. We think nothing of crossing the border to visit Tijuana, Mexico, for a day of shopping and sightseeing, but Mexican citizens must qualify economically to obtain even a tourist visa to enter the U.S., and there are a great many who do not qualify.

Over the last few years, I have attended several gatherings of undocumented Latinos who volunteered to share their heart-wrenching stories of hardship in crossing the border to enter the U.S. I have asked myself, “What would compel me to risk my life, crossing a barren desert for days without food or water to enter the U.S.?” As I have learned more about the hopeless economic situation that many come from, I have concluded that I would do the same for my family given similar circumstances. But the risk is high: an estimated 2,500 people have died crossing the border since the early 1990s. No one knows the exact number; only God knows.

A few years ago I participated in a program called “Borderlinks” which is based in Nogales, Arizona, and Nogales in the state of Sonora, Mexico. On the Mexico side of the border, we spent the night in a shelter for those who were about to brave the hot, dry Sonoran desert to cross into the U.S., without documents, of course. I will never forget the statistics listed on the walls there which recorded the number of people who had died crossing into the desert. We followed the trail that many had taken and noted evidence of their crossing through clothing and plastic water bottles strewn in the desert. One woman who worked in the shelter told us about a young couple from Guatemala who had stayed there the night before they set out to cross. They had a newborn baby with them. She pleaded with them not to make the treacherous journey, but despite her warnings, they left the next morning. A few days later, the couple was back at the center, just the two of them, having been arrested by the border patrol in the U.S. and returned to Mexico. The worker asked them where their baby was. “Lost,” they said. The desert had proven too inhospitable an environment for such a young infant—a tragic sacrifice made by a young couple in exchange for their hope for a new beginning in a strange new land.

I have been guilty of taking my U.S. citizenship privilege for granted. What about you? What does it mean to have the privilege of U.S. citizenship? Here are a few benefits to consider:

1. If I want to get a driver’s license, it’s a simple matter of bringing along my birth certificate, Social Security card and insurance information and taking the test. There’s no need to worry about whether I have the proper documents to get a driver’s license.
2. If I apply for a job, I do not have to worry about what to write under “Social Security Number.”
3. When Social Security and Medicare are taken out of my paycheck, I have a reasonable hope that someday either I or my dependents will receive the benefit of those taxes.
4. I can go in any bank and set up a checking account.
5. If a police officer pulls me over, I can be sure I haven’t been singled out because of my immigration status.

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6. I am not worried on a daily basis about being “discovered” and being deported along with my family.
7. I can be reasonably sure that if I need legal or medical advice or help, my citizenship status will not be a consideration.
8. I can apply for a passport that will allow me to travel back and forth to most countries in the world.
9. I can vote and consider running for political office.
10. I or a member of my family can apply for scholarship aid to institutions of higher education and expect to compete on level ground with other U.S. citizens.

When we reflect on the issue of immigration and the existence of borders between countries, it is good to recall that when seen from outer space, the earth does not reveal any borders. Borders are human-made creations that separate people who are governed by different governments. God’s world has no borders. God does not create “illegal” people. The human condition has created these barriers to the shalom that God intends for creation.

In his book, *Resident Aliens*, Stanley Hauerwas reminds us of the Apostle Paul’s assertion that Christians are a colony of heaven, and as such, are “resident aliens” in this world. As “resident aliens” we have something in common with people of Israel who were once aliens in Egypt. We have something in common with Mary, Joseph and the baby Jesus who fled the wrath of King Herod and were aliens in Egypt for a time. We have something in common with Ruth and Naomi. And we have something in common with the eleven million undocumented aliens in the United States.

WORSHIP AID – ‘YOUR PEOPLE SHALL BE MY PEOPLE’

RESPONSIVE READING

Remember the Immigrant

We serve a God who directs us to care especially for those most vulnerable in society. Our Scriptures tell us of God’s special concern for the “alien” or the “stranger,” or as more contemporary translations say—the immigrant. For the Lord our God is God of gods and Lord of lords, the great God, mighty and awesome, who shows no partiality and accepts no bribes. God defends the cause of the orphan and the widow, and loves the immigrant, giving the immigrant food and clothing. And we are to love those who are immigrants, for God’s people were immigrants in Egypt. (Deuteronomy 10:17-19)

We ask God to open our eyes to the struggles of immigrant workers, for we know that: We must not take advantage of a hired worker who is poor and needy, whether the worker is a resident or immigrant living in our town. We must pay the worker the wages promptly because the worker is poor and counting on it. (Deuteronomy 24:14)

God’s desire is that those who build houses may live in them,
And that those who plant may eat. (Isaiah 65:22)

And yet we know this is not possible for many in our midst. We know of farmworkers who cannot feed their families, construction workers who have no homes, nursing home workers who have no health care, restaurant workers who can not afford a meal in the restaurant.

We know that too many immigrant workers among us are not receiving the fruits of their labor, nor the justice required by the courts.

God charges our judges to hear disputes and judge fairly, whether the case involves citizens or immigrants. (Deuteronomy 1:16)

But our laws do not adequately protect immigrants. Our legal and social service programs exclude many immigrants. Our education programs undervalue immigrant children.

God tells us that the community is to have the same rules for citizens and for immigrants living among us. His is a lasting ordinance for the generations to come. Citizens and immigrants shall be the same before the Lord. (Numbers 15:15)

When an immigrant lives in our land,
We will not mistreat him or her. We will treat an immigrant as one of our native born. We will love an immigrant as ourselves, for God’s people were once immigrants in Egypt. (Leviticus 19:33-34)

To those who employ immigrant workers, we lift up God's command:

Do not oppress an immigrant. God's people know how it feels to be immigrants because they were immigrants in Egypt. (Exodus 23: 9)

And a special word to those who employ immigrant farmworkers:

Make sure immigrants get a day of rest. (Exodus 23:12)

To those who craft our immigration laws and policies, we lift up God's command:

Do not deprive the immigrant or the orphan of justice, or take the cloak of the widow as a pledge. Remember that God's people were slaves in Egypt and the Lord our God redeemed them from there. (Deuteronomy 24:17-18)

To all of us who seek to do God's will, help us to:

Love one another as God has loved us. Help us to treat immigrants with the justice and compassion that God shows to each of us. Amen.

(from the National Interfaith Committee for Worker Justice, www.nicwj.org/materials/materials_binserts.html)

PRAYER OF CONFESSION

Tender and Fierce God,
whose work is justice and whose delight is mercy,
forgive us for ignoring the cries of workers
who labor under the tyranny of harassment, violence and poverty.
Free us from greed
that comforts our bodies and eats away at our souls.
Free us for a life of joyful resistance
to evil, injustice and oppression
in whatever forms they present themselves;
through Jesus Christ our only Lord.
Amen.

(from the United Methodist Church Labor Day Message, accessible at www.nicwj.org/materials/materials_binserts.html)

SUGGESTED HYMNS

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|---------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------|
| ✓ Come, We Who Love God's Name | NCH 379 |
| ✓ O Food to Pilgrims Given | UMH 631/TH 308 |
| ✓ O God of Vision | CH 288 |
| ✓ In the Breaking of the Bread/
Cuando Paritmos el Pan del Senor | GA 841 |

w Hymnal Legend w

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|-------------------------------------------|
| † UMH—United Methodist Hymnal |
| † GA—Gather Hymnal (Roman Catholic) |
| † TH—The Hymnal 1982 (Episcopal) |
| † CH—Chalice Hymnal (Disciples of Christ) |
| † NCH—New Century Hymnal (UCC) |

ADDITIONAL PRAYERS

Alternate Responsive Reading

We gather today to lift up immigrants who live and work in our community. We give thanks for the many gifts and talents they bring to our nation.

We give thanks and pray for all living in our community, but especially those who are immigrants among us.

There are over 32 million immigrants in the U.S. living and working in cities, suburbs and rural areas across the nation. One in eight workers today is foreign born.

Except for Native Americans, we were all once new to this country.

Some of us came to the U.S. escaping poverty or oppression. Others of us were forced here on slave ships. Still others came seeking opportunity.

New immigrants come for many of the same reasons. Most immigrants come escaping poverty and oppression and seeking opportunities. Leviticus 19, verses 33 and 34 tell us:

"Don't mistreat any foreigners who live in your land. Instead, treat them as well as you treat citizens and love them as much as you love yourself. Remember, you were once foreigners in the land of Egypt. I am the LORD your God."

We serve a God who wants justice for all of God's people.

God desires justice for native born and foreign born alike. All people are children of God. Amen.

(from The National Interfaith Committee for Worker Justice, "Celebrating Immigrants," www.nicwj.org/materials/materials_celebImm.html)

ADDITIONAL HELPS

• QUOTES •

Remember, remember always, that all of us... are descended from immigrants and revolutionists.
Franklin D. Roosevelt

Everywhere immigrants have enriched and strengthened the fabric of American life.
John F. Kennedy

Immigration is the sincerest form of flattery.
Jack Paar

Give me your tired, your poor, your huddled masses, yearning to breath free, the wretched refuse of your teeming shore, send these, the homeless, tempest tossed, I lift my lamp beside the golden door.
Emma Lazarus
(inscribed on the Statue of Liberty)

• PERSONAL VIGNETTE •

IMMIGRATION THROUGH THE EYES OF IMMIGRANTS

(from "Hands of Harvest, Hearts of Justice," a North Carolina farmworker curriculum produced by the NC Council of Churches' Farm Worker Ministry Committee and the National Farm Worker Ministry)

Stories are taken from individuals working in North Carolina, interviewed at the Episcopal Farmworker Ministry, Newton Grove, NC, Summer 2002.

JAMIE

[My] experience began Saturday, May 20 of the year 2000. It was the second time that we tried to cross into the American dream. The person who was going to take us across the border from Mexico to the United States was a lady named Alma; she hid us in the trunk of a compact car, which was very uncomfortable. She told us not to move for anything, and if immigration caught us to tell them that we had all three bought the car together. I was wearing three pairs of pants and four shirts underneath my jacket because they would not let us take suitcases, and the heat was suffocating. I remember that first I got into the trunk, and then my brother. We were both situated in the same position, with my face against his back. It felt a little bit difficult to breathe, but when the car began to move I could breathe better, but not very well. Soon, when we were in Tucson—what bad luck—a narcotics patroller stopped Alma and took her out of the car.

That was when my nightmare began. They closed the car completely with us still lying in it. I couldn't find any air; I tried to find a pocket of oxygen somewhere, but my brother told me, "Don't move! Don't push me; you're hurting me!" But the sensation of asphyxiation was unbearable. I don't know how long I was in that torturous situation when soon everything started to get dark. I lost feeling in my body and something incredible happened—moments from my life began to fly by like a movie. It is very strange to begin to die like that.

Then my brother yelled, saying that immigration had tried to open the trunk, but could not, so they broke the back seats. Thus I began to feel air again, a lot of air. I could not move so they pulled me out by the hands and left me lying against the car until I could talk and see. I thanked them and they put me in a patrol car where Alma already was. They gave me water and the immigration officer turned the air conditioning on high.

This is part of what one has to go through to achieve the American dream.

JUAN

In my life I have known many stories of people fighting daily in order to move ahead in search of opportunities to survive and fulfill their needs and those of their families—people like me and others trying to achieve hopes and dreams. To forge a better future with strength, work, and dedication even though it means the tears of an anguished mother facing the painful situation of knowing that her children are far away, watching time pass, praying that she will receive good news from her children.

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What I can now tell is only a short part of a long story of my life, in which one day I left my house seeing the tears of my mother and my siblings as they watched me set off for dangerous places in which many lose their lives. These thoughts pushed us forward and led us to a point divided by a deep and wide river.

Upon arriving there, I, my father, and the others had to look to the other side, trying to get to it; and on the first try only one made it, but soon returned. The second time, we tried two at a time—I with my clothes in a bag full of air and my dreams with me. I dived in but only got to the middle of the river when the bag full of air that had supported me broke and the current dragged me and my clothing under, flooding my mouth and lungs and dreams so that I felt desperate, pleading for anyone to help me. One person tried, throwing me a dry log that came to me, and I with even less strength pulled my head out of the water; I could see my father crying with the other people, only to submerge again—tired, without strength, with my lungs full of water and in my mind remembering every instant of my life, every moment together with those I care for, sadness, joys, and so many things, so many dreams mixed with so many motivations. For them, I prayed to God; and in that moment I remember what he said to me: “Ayúdate que yo te ayude” - “help yourself so that I might help you” - and with my knees on the rocks at the bottom of the river, I found the strength to propel myself up. And taking his hand, I reached the surface and swam to the shore where I began a new opportunity to continue forward, live happily with all the beauty God has given me. I give God thanks for all of the strength, faith, and family that he has given me, only him, my God.

• CONTACTS AND OTHER RESOURCES •

- W www.nccouncilofchurches.org/resources/policystatements/latino-population.html - NC Council of Churches Policy Statement, “Our Increasing Latino Population,” adopted November 12, 2002. Contains statistics, an explanation of “Why People of Faith Should Care,” as well as “Policy Recommendations.”
- W www.nicwj.org – Interfaith Worker Justice, an organization that calls upon our religious values in order to educate, organize, and mobilize the religious community in the U.S. on issues and campaigns that will improve wages, benefits, and working conditions for workers, especially low-wage workers. Contains useful information on workers who are largely underpaid immigrants.
- W www.elpueblo.org—El Pueblo, Inc., a North Carolina non-profit statewide advocacy and public policy organization dedicated to strengthening the Latino Community. This mission is accomplished through leadership development, proactive and direct advocacy, education, and promotion of cross-cultural understanding in partnerships at the local, state, and national levels.
- W www.nilc.org – National Immigration Law Center, a national support center whose mission is to protect and promote the rights and opportunities of low-income immigrants and their family members. NILC staff specializes in immigration law, and the employment and public benefits rights of immigrants. NILC conducts policy analysis and impact litigation and provides publications, technical advice, and trainings to a broad constituency of legal aid agencies, community groups, and pro bono attorneys.
- W www.nnirr.org – National Network for Immigrant and Refugee Rights, a national organization composed of local coalitions and immigrant, refugee, community, religious, civil rights and labor organizations and activists. NNIRR works to promote a just immigration and refugee policy in the United States and to defend and expand the rights of all immigrants and refugees, regardless of immigration status. Contains useful resources and statistics on immigration.

KEY FACTS

DID YOU KNOW?

- q According to a 2004 estimate by the Pew Hispanic Center, there are currently about 395,000 undocumented immigrants living in North Carolina. More than 80% of these immigrants are from Mexico and other Latin American countries.¹
- q Since 1995, unauthorized immigrants have exceeded those with permission to enter the U.S., according to the Pew Hispanic Center. Nationally, 53% of 1.3 million immigrants in 2004 were unauthorized. In North Carolina, it is estimated that 44% of the state’s Hispanic population is undocumented, according to the Kenan Institute of Private Enterprise at UNC-Chapel Hill²
- q From 1990 to 2000, North Carolina experienced a quadruple increase in the number of Latinos living in the state, a faster-growing rate than any other state in the U.S.³

Undocumented Workers: Myth and Reality⁶

MYTH #1: UNDOCUMENTED IMMIGRANTS COME TO THE UNITED STATES TO GET WELFARE.

Undocumented men come to the United States almost exclusively to work. In 2003, over 90% of undocumented men worked—a rate higher than that for U.S. citizens or legal immigrants. Undocumented men are younger, less likely to be in school, and less likely to be retired than other men. Moreover, undocumented immigrants are ineligible for welfare, food stamps, Medicaid, and most other public benefits.

MYTH #2: UNDOCUMENTED IMMIGRANTS ALL CROSSED THE MEXICAN BORDER.

Between 60 and 75 percent of the more than 10 million undocumented immigrants entered illegally and without inspection—mostly across the Mexican border. The other 25 to 40 percent entered legally and subsequently overstayed visas or otherwise violated the terms of their admission.

MYTH #3: MOST CHILDREN OF THE UNDOCUMENTED ARE UNAUTHORIZED.

In fact, two-thirds of all children with undocumented parents (about 3 million) are U.S.-born citizens who live in mixed-status families.

MYTH #4: A LARGE SHARE OF SCHOOLCHILDREN ARE UNDOCUMENTED.

Nationally in 2000, only 1.5% of elementary schoolchildren (enrolled in kindergarten through 5th grade) and 3% of secondary children (grades 6-12) were undocumented. Slightly higher shares—5% in elementary and 4% in secondary schools—had undocumented parents.

MYTH #5: UNDOCUMENTED IMMIGRANTS DO NOT PAY TAXES.

Undocumented immigrants pay the same real estate taxes—whether they own homes or taxes are passed through to rents—and the same sales and other consumption taxes as everyone else. The majority of state and local costs of schooling and other services are funded by these taxes. Additionally, the U.S. Social Security Administration has estimated that three quarters of undocumented immigrants pay payroll taxes, and that they contribute \$6-7 billion in Social Security funds that they will be unable to claim.

- q Nationally, 13% of the population is Latino. However, that percentage is much higher in some states such as Florida (17%), Arizona (25%), Texas and California (32%), and New Mexico (42%). By 2040, one out of every four Americans will be Latino. In 100 years it is projected that the majority of all Americans will be Latino.
- q Rob Paral of the American Immigration Law Foundation writes: "Current immigration policies are completely out of sync with the U.S. economy's demand for workers who fill less-skilled jobs, especially in the case of Mexican workers. While U.S. immigration policies present a wide array of avenues for immigrants to enter the United States, very few of these avenues are tailored to workers in less-skilled occupations...Only one of the five categories of visas for permanent immigration status is tailored to less-skilled workers, and it is capped at 5,000 visas [nationally] per year."⁴
- q Researchers at the Kenan Institute of Private Enterprises at UNC-Chapel Hill estimate that Latinos, both legal and undocumented, cost the state about \$817 million in education, health care, and corrections expenses. However, they contribute \$756 million in income, property and consumer taxes, meaning a net "cost" to the state budget of \$102 per Latino resident. However, these figures do not account for their additional economic contributions to the state economy of about \$9 billion through spending and purchases, and the creation of 89,600 jobs. Therefore, there is a net economic "benefit" to the state.⁵
- q It is against the law for employers to hire undocumented immigrants; however enforcement is nonexistent. In North Carolina, local police cannot arrest immigrants for the sole reason that they are undocumented. That job belongs to the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), part of the Homeland Security Department. However, ICE officials say that their biggest concern is national security, and they focus only on finding and deporting immigrant felons and illegal workers in sensitive workplaces. Cracking down on illegal workers or the employers who hire them is a low priority.

1. News & Observer, February 26, 2006, citing study by Pew Hispanic Center.

2. Ibid.

3. "Latinos in the United States and North Carolina: Demographics based on work by Andrew Hernandez, San Antonio, TX," The following fact is from this source as well.

4. Rob Paral, "No Way In: U.S. Immigration Policy Leaves Few Legal Options for Mexican Workers," American Immigration Law Foundation, www.aifl.org/ipc/nowayin.asp.

5. News & Observer, February 26, 2006, citing study by the Kenan Institute. The following fact is from this source as well.

6. [table] From the Urban Institute, www.urban.org/publications/900898.html.