

U.S. policy toward refugees has been just as cruel. Even as the U.S. government was waging war against Nazi expansionism, it was simultaneously barring Jewish refugees from obtaining asylum. The stated reason was "national security": they might be Nazi spies, the government said. Today, we're told the same thing about displaced Syrians and Iraqis: that they could be terrorists. By the end of 2016 the Obama administration had admitted fewer than 14,000 Syrian refugees – out of 11 million displaced Syrians.

MYTH: The United States doesn't owe foreigners anything

FACT: U.S. foreign policy is largely responsible for the conditions that produce migrants and refugees. In Latin America, our government has historically opposed efforts to redistribute wealth, instead supporting right-wing tyrants who kill and torture dissidents. In Guatemala in 1954, the U.S. helped overthrow an elected government, ushering in forty years of state violence that killed over 200,000 people. In El Salvador in the 1980s, it funded a military government that murdered 75,000 people. Economically, the United States has supported pro-corporate policies that destroy local economies and undermine workers' wages. For instance, NAFTA flooded the Mexican market with cheap U.S. corn, destroying 1.9 million agricultural jobs (at the same time that it also hurt workers in the United States).⁶ The U.S. role in the Middle East has been just as harmful. The 2003 U.S. invasion of Iraq killed or displaced millions of people and plunged the entire region into sectarian chaos, fueling the rise of ISIS and other extremist groups. The U.S. bears heavy blame for the current Middle East refugee crisis.

Why do the Myths persist?

If all the nasty myths about immigrants lack factual basis, why do they endure? A big reason is that they're *useful*. Bosses love to pit workers against each other. Corporations demand the freedom to cross borders, but they don't want workers to be able to cross borders in search of better jobs. They want immigration that serves their needs, but they don't want immigrants with *rights*. It's better to have undocumented workers who are terrified of deportation and resented by native-born workers.

When diverse groups of workers collaborate with each other against bosses, the entire working class benefits in the form of higher wages. Less racial inequality among workers correlates with higher wages across the board including for whites.⁷ Only when immigrants and the native-born unite can we achieve justice.

SOURCES

¹ **Walter A. Ewing, et al.**, "The Criminalization of Immigrants in the United States," *American Immigration Council*, July 2015.

² **Kathleen Newland**, "The U.S. Record Shows Refugees Are Not a Threat," *Migration Policy Institute*, October 2015 (emphasis added); **Kurt Eichenwald**, "Right-Wing Extremists Are a Bigger Threat to America Than ISIS," *Newsweek*, February 4, 2016.

³ **Leah Zallman, et al.**, "Immigrant Contributed an Estimated \$115.2 Billion More to the Medicare Trust Fund Than They Took Out in 2002-09," *Health Affairs* 32, no. 6 (2013): 1153-60; Daniel Costa et al., "Facts about immigration and the U.S. Economy," *Economic Policy Institute*, August 12, 2014.

⁴ **Julie L. Hotchkiss, et al.**, "The Wage Impact of Undocumented Workers: Evidence from Administrative Data," *Southern Economic Journal* 81, no. 4 (2015): 874-906.

⁵ **American Immigration Council**, "Why Don't They Just Get In Line?" August 2016.

⁶ **Mark Weisbrot, et al.**, "Did NAFTA Help Mexico? An Assessment after Twenty Years," *Center for Economic and Policy Research*, 2014.

⁷ **Michael Reich**, *Racial Inequality: A Political-Economic Analysis* (Princeton, 1981).

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IMMIGRANTS

IN THE

UNITED STATES

MYTH VS. FACT



Inside...

Immigrants and refugees are LESS prone to crime

They pay taxes, yet often can't use public services

When immigrants win, we ALL win (except the 1%)

...and more!

Except for Native Americans, we are all descendants of people who moved (voluntary or involuntarily) to a land already inhabited by others. Yet today there is tremendous fear and resentment about immigrants and refugees, who are portrayed as undeserving moochers at best and terrorists at worst.

MYTH: Immigrants are more prone to violent crime

FACT: Immigrants are actually far less likely than others to engage in crime. The native-born are incarcerated at much higher rates than immigrants. In fact, U.S. violent crime rates have dropped by 48 percent since 1990 – just as the number of undocumented immigrants was rising from 3.5 million to 11.2 million. ¹

Are refugees terrorists? In 2015 the Migration Policy Institute reported that “the United States has resettled 784,000 refugees since September 11, 2001,” and “exactly three resettled refugees have been arrested for planning terrorist activities—and it is worth noting two were not planning an attack in the United States and the plans of the third were barely credible.” Those three people constituted just 0.0004% of total refugees. Most of the terrorist attacks on U.S. soil are committed by white, non-Muslim, right-wing extremists. ²

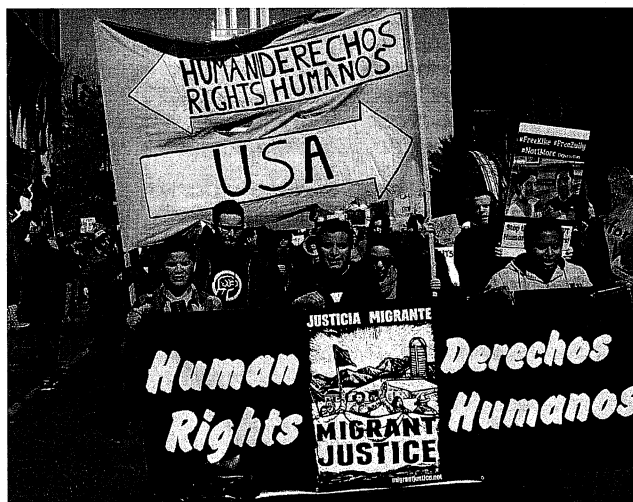
MYTH: Immigrants don't pay taxes

FACT: All undocumented immigrants pay sales taxes and property taxes. Most also pay income and payroll taxes, since their employers list them on payrolls using fake Social Security numbers.

However, they are usually ineligible for Social Security benefits, food stamps, welfare, and unemployment insurance. As a result, virtually all undocumented immigrants pay more money in taxes than they will ever receive in the form of social services and benefits.³

MYTH: Immigrants steal jobs from U.S. workers and undercut wages

FACT: Immigration has only small effects on overall employment and wages, and those small effects are likely positive. A 2015 study in the *Southern Economic Journal* found that higher immigrant employment has a positive impact on the wages of non-immigrant workers, probably because it increases the range and skills available and allows for more efficient specialization.⁴ The impact of immigration on the U.S.-born working class depends partly on the response of U.S.-born workers. When those workers or their union discriminate against immigrants, it makes the entire working class weaker in relation to the bosses. By contrast, a unified workforce can improve life for all workers.



MYTH: Foreigners could enter legally, if they'd just “get in line”

FACT: Opportunities for entering the U.S. legally are very limited. Doing so usually requires 1) a U.S. employer who will “sponsor” you, 2) a close relative who already lives here, or 3) a demonstrated threat of extreme persecution in your home country. Even then, it can take years or even decades to obtain “legal” status.⁵ But most people from other countries do not meet any of those three requirements. In other words, for most prospective immigrants there isn't any “line” to get into! These requirements were only enacted in the 20th century. Prior to World War I, there were almost no restrictions on immigration. The ancestors of most white U.S. citizens were thus free to enter. Today's immigrants face a much harsher legal climate.

MYTH: The U.S. has historically welcomed immigrants and refugees

FACT: Most immigrants (especially non-whites) have encountered hostility. In the 19th century, the Irish and Italians were accused of stealing jobs, using public resources, and committing violent crimes. The Chinese had it even worse: they suffered segregation and intense racism, and in 1882 – the year of the first federal anti-immigrant law – Chinese workers were prohibited from entering the U.S. altogether. Almost all non-whites were barred from entering by the 1924 Johnson Immigration Act. When immigrants have been welcomed in, it's usually to serve as a cheap labor source with few rights.

Why should all this matter to YOU in Middlebury, VT?

NE dairy industry and the policing of farmworkers:

The New England dairy industry often conjures up images of idyllic family farms with cows dotting green hillsides. The reality on the ground is quite grim. The industry has been consolidating immensely over the last several decades, resulting in larger scale and more mechanized dairy farms. Corporations like Ben & Jerry's and Cabot Cheese, which source their cream from these farms, turn a profit by selling customers a dishonest representation of the context in which their commodities are produced. In the past 60 years, Vermont alone has lost over 80% of its dairy farms, from 10,637 dairies in 1953 to less than 1,000 in 2015. Many of the remaining medium to large dairy farms have only been able to sustain themselves by employing migrant workers, mostly from Mexico and Central America.

The presence of Border Patrol and Immigration Customs Enforcement (ICE) in Northeastern states has ramped up since 9/11, to become one of the largest employers along the US-Canadian border where many dairy farms are located. Each time Border Patrol or ICE detain or deport farmworkers, they spread fear among migrant workers, driving many into hiding, sometimes for months or years at a time. In turn, farmworkers often endure more severe working and housing conditions as their isolation causes heightened dependence on their bosses for mobility and access to services.

Given the predatory enforcement activity of both local police and immigration officials, it is useful to recall the role of slave patrols in U.S. history. Chattel slavery has absolutely no parallel in U.S. history. The connections between these systems of policing are meant to challenge our linear conception of human progress. While in slave patrols, poor working-class white folks were given enhanced social status and charged with chasing down runaway slaves and returning them to their 'masters.' These were the very organizations upon which the first police forces were constructed in the US. In this specific context and across the country, Border Patrol and ICE have followed the model of slave patrols—dividing working class people along racial lines and spreading fear amongst already exploited immigrants.

Despite the many threats to a human dairy industry in New England and the risks of retaliation, a considerable number of farmworkers regularly dedicate their minimal time off to political organizing. *Migrant Justice* is a farmworker-led human rights organization based out of Burlington, Vermont that has been fighting for the last seven years to transform the New England dairy industry and build farmworker power. Despite facing targeted ICE arrests and detentions (check out Democracy Now! coverage of the most recent instance in March), *Migrant Justice* organizers are continuing to promote their Milk with Dignity campaign. This grassroots movement demands that the corporations of the dairy industry respect and uphold farmworkers' fundamental labor and human rights, and that they redistribute the profits extracted from their labor back to the farmworkers.

Support Vermont's farmworker community by coming to the rally Migrant Justice is organizing for International Workers Day—MAYDAY MARCH FOR DIGNITY!

Why: It is very urgent right now that students and working people in this country unite to demand dignity and respect for immigrants and low-wage workers!

When: Monday, May 1st – College vans and cars leaving ADK at 10:30 am

Where: 294 N Winooski Ave, Burlington

Transportation: go/mayday → sign up for a seat in one of the college vans Immigrant Solidarity Group has booked for the event.

Visit migrantjustice.net to support their work financially and through other solidarity actions.