

# Farm Workers and Migration: Push and Pull Factors

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"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."

Leviticus 19:33-34





# Farm workers are the backbone of our food system I

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In order to feed the country, an estimated 2 million farm workers labor in the fields across the United States, **handpicking the vast majority of fruit and vegetable crops** produced here and supporting our multi-billion dollar agricultural industry.



Agricultural work is **one of the most dangerous and least adequately compensated** jobs in the United States.

For their demanding physical labor, farm workers earn an annual average of between **\$10,000 to \$12,499** individually and **\$15,000 to \$17,499** per family.

# Farm workers are the backbone of our food system II

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- Farm workers are **excluded from important national labor protections** that protect workers in other economic sectors.
- They face health problems resulting from **pesticide exposure, deplorable housing conditions, workplace abuse**, among other causes.
- Many farm worker women experience **sexual harassment and discrimination**.



# Who are our nation's farm workers?

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- Farm workers are U.S. citizens, legal permanent residents, seasonal laborers on special guest worker visas (H-2A workers), or undocumented workers.
- **The vast majority of farm workers** –78% according to the most recent National Agricultural Workers Survey– **are foreign-born** and crossed a border to get here.
- It is estimated that **at least 6 out of 10 of our country's farm workers are undocumented.**





# Why would somebody leave their home to come to the United States?

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Coming to the United States is a difficult process through which **people incur debt, leave their families, and live in isolation under strenuous conditions.** Why would somebody do this?

Generally, people undergo such harsh conditions because they have no choice.

There are different **push and pull** factors that encourage people to come to the United States...

# The Roots of Migration



*"I migrated to the United States because I could not find a job here in Mexico, and because the little money that my family earned was not enough to support my children or to pay for our most pressing needs. Leaving my family was very painful, but I wanted to be able to provide for them. I wanted the American Dream."*

Guadalupe Hernandez, Mexico



# Push and Pull Factors

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<b><u>Push Factors</u></b> (conditions that drive people to leave home)	<b><u>Pull Factors</u></b> (conditions that attract people to a new country)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Poverty or economic hardship</b></li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Potential for better wages</b></li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Unemployment, lack of opportunity</b></li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Potential job opportunities</b></li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>War or political unrest</b></li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Political stability</b></li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Environmental factors (drought, crop failure, flooding, natural disasters)</b></li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Fertile land, less risk of natural disaster, better infrastructure</b></li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Lack of services or basic amenities</b></li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Better service provision (healthcare, education, etc.)</b></li></ul>

# What causes the push factors?

- Government corruption
- Social services are not a government priority
- Low investment in research and education; science and technology
- Ingrained social inequalities
- Racism
- Country's international debt



- Subsidies for multinational corporations that undermine small or local producers
- International agreements/treaties that benefit a minority of people and corporations



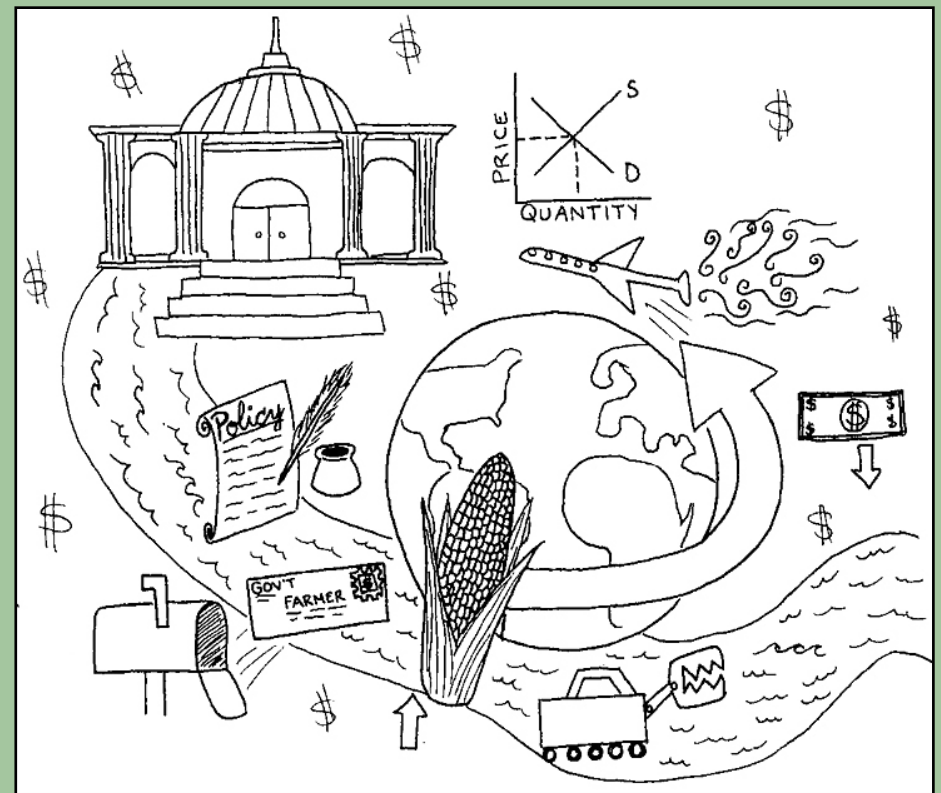
# North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA)

Paradoxically, workers from other countries are sometimes forced to migrate as a direct result of U.S. foreign policy.

For example, when the United States and Mexico signed **NAFTA** (the North American Free Trade Agreement) in 1994, **government-subsidized corn** that was **cheaply produced** in the U.S. **began flooding the market** in Mexico.

With this new influx underpriced corn, **small farmers in Mexico could not compete**. They could no longer afford to make a living growing corn.

Subsequently, millions were **forced out of their jobs**. Unable to find jobs in cities, they had **no option** but to leave their families and move north to look for work.



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One of many communities affected by NAFTA is Mexico's coffee farming community.

The state-owned Mexican Coffee Institute (INMECAFE), which provided small producers with credits, technical assistance, stable prices, and export markets, was **shut down as part of the agricultural reforms preceding NAFTA.**

With the dissolution of INMECAFE, small-scale farmers could no longer compete with big producers and had little choice but to migrate or to sell their harvest to local middlemen who would buy the coffee at rock-bottom prices and then sell it abroad for a profit.

Source: Witness for Peace



Migration from Mexico's coffee growing regions is high, forcing families to depend on contracted labor to replace family members who have left to find work in the United States or other places.



# The Right to Stay Home

If the root causes of migration are addressed, people could **stay home** and provide for their families. The results would be:

- Intact family structures and communities
- Preservation of local and indigenous cultures
- Better living and working conditions
- More equitable societies
- Less outsourcing of jobs in developed countries



(Image source: [familiasocializacioncultura.blogspot.com](http://familiasocializacioncultura.blogspot.com))

**Here are some things that  
you can do to support  
people's right to stay home...**

# The Role of U.S. Foreign Policy I

U.S. foreign policy contributes to the political, social, and economic instability of countries that people migrate from. As U.S. citizens it is our responsibility to:

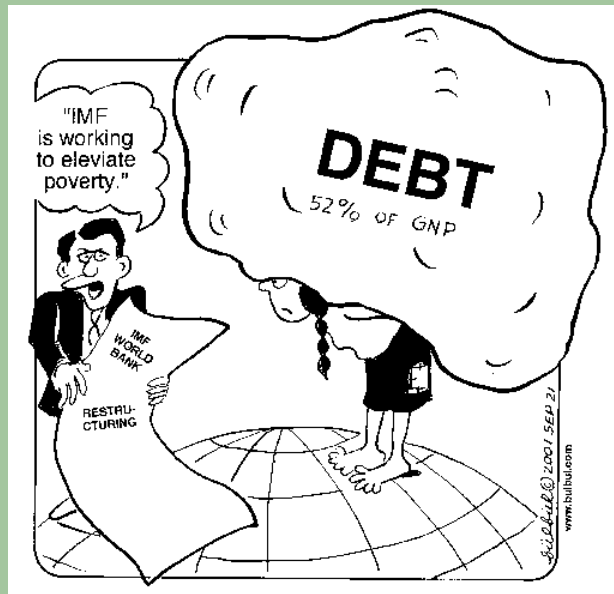


Image Source: <http://www.bulbul.com/imf/IMF.gif>

- **Advocate loan forgiveness for poor countries.** These loans are usually given by international financial institutions such as the World Bank or the International Monetary Fund (IMF).
  - Decisions in the World Bank and the IMF are made by a board of directors which represents 185 countries. However, the voting power of each country is determined by the nation's financial contribution to the institution. The United States holds 17% of the voting power (just enough for veto power on a majority vote decision requiring 85%).
  - The president of the World Bank is almost always from the United States.
  - Despite the tremendous effects on their economies and societies developing countries hold little power within the institutions.



# The Role of U.S. Foreign Policy II

As U.S. citizens it is our responsibility to (cont.):

- **Advocate for the elimination of Structural Adjustment Programs (SAPs)** which destroy social policies that protect the most vulnerable citizens.

SAPs are the conditions imposed on developing countries by International Financing Institutions (IFIs) in order for these countries to receive aid in the form of loans or lower interest rates on existing loans.

Cutting spending on basic services (education, health, etc.), privatizing state-owned enterprises, imposing laws more favorable to foreign investors, lifting import/export restrictions, and focusing the economy on exports are all examples of the conditions imposed by IFIs using SAPs.



Image Source: <http://www.goolgule.com/reexamining-structural-adjustment-programs/>

**“The World Bank and others stimulate borrowing by the rich and powerful in the poor countries, the risky loans yield high returns, and when the system crashes, structural adjustment programs transfer the costs to the poor, who never borrowed the money in the first place.”**

- Noam Chomsky

# The Role of U.S. Foreign Policy III

As U.S. citizens it is our responsibility to (cont.):

- **Hold U.S. corporations accountable** so that they have sound environmental, social, and business practices abroad and so that they offer good working conditions, wages, and benefits to all employees.
- **Support democratically elected governments** that encourage political stability in other countries.





# The Role of U.S. Foreign Policy IV

- Make sure that our trade agreements are **FAIR** to all countries involved.

These agreements must protect workers' rights, the environment, and the autonomy of indigenous communities. They must also include fair immigration policies and have equivalent protections and subsidies for all parties involved.



# The Role of U.S. Foreign Policy V

As U.S. citizens it is our responsibility to  
(cont.):

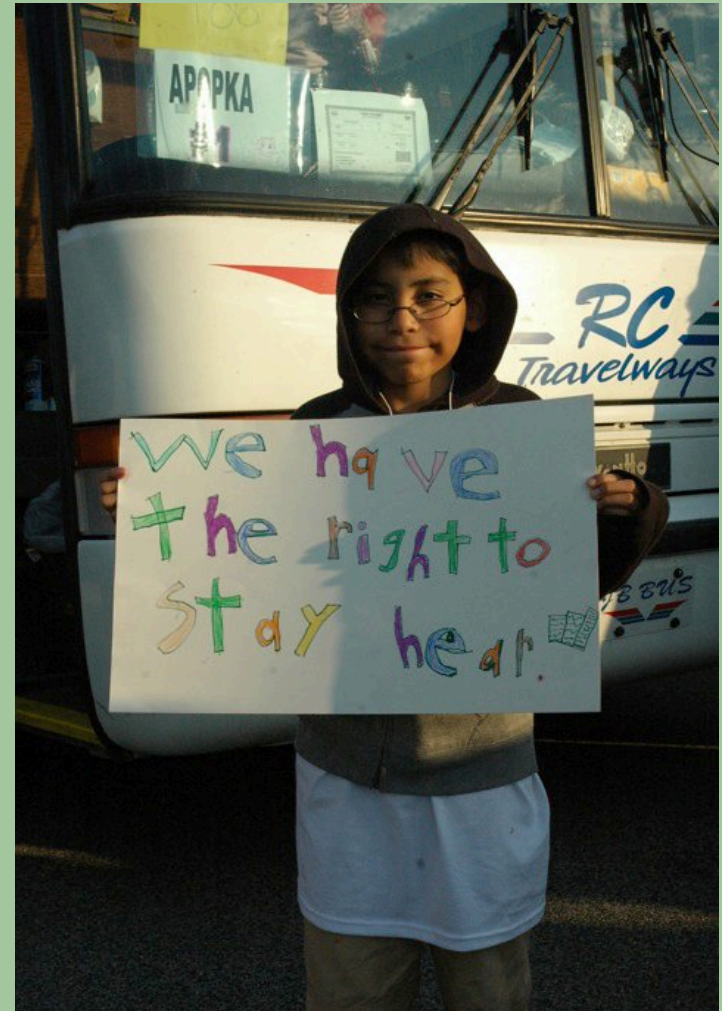
- **Advocate for fair immigration reform that prevents the separation of families, halts the criminalization of immigrants, and provides safety to migrants along their journey.**

Immigration laws in Latin America are now stricter than ever due to the pressure from the U.S. government to hinder immigrants BEFORE they get to U.S. soil. Our governments must realize that people will move across borders just as capital does.



# The Role of National Policy: Comprehensive Immigration Reform

- There are currently around **12 million undocumented** people in the United States.
- There is a strong need for **comprehensive immigration reform** in order to provide those already in the country with a pathway to citizenship.





# Current Options for Migration I

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Image source: [usa.immigrationvisaforms.com](http://usa.immigrationvisaforms.com)

Until we address the roots of migration people will continue to migrate to the United States.

**There are three ways to become a citizen of the United States.**

1. To be born in the United States
2. To have at least one parent who is a U.S. citizen
3. To be naturalized (after 5 years of legal permanent residency)

# Current Options for Migration II

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**There are 5 ways to become a legal permanent resident:**

- 1. When an immediate family member sponsors you**
  - Citizens of countries with a high number of migrants living in the United States have longer waiting periods (for example; Mexico, India, Philippines, etc.). Waiting periods can be up to 25 years.
  - Citizens can sponsor more relatives than legal permanent residents.



# Current Options for Migration III



Image sources: [immigrationnavigator.com](http://immigrationnavigator.com) and <http://article.wn.com//>

## 2. When an employer sponsors you

- **H1 Visas:** For “skilled” labor (for example, computer engineers). Workers are allowed to change employers.
- **H2 visas:** For “unskilled” labor (for example, farm workers). Workers are not allowed to change employers.
  - **H2A** - agricultural workers (planting and harvesting crops)
  - **H2B** - non-agricultural workers (landscaping, construction, forestry-planting or cutting, hotel cleaning staff)



# Current Options for Migration IV

## 3. When you are fleeing prosecution and apply for political asylum or refugee status

- The burden of proof is on the applicant and their prosecution must be based on their identity (nationality, religion, political ideology, sexual orientation, etc.).
- The applicant must prove that their government is unwilling or unable to protect them.

*Many people apply for political asylum or refugee status after becoming victims of war, receiving death threats, or being prosecuted because of their ideas, religious beliefs, or gender identities.*



Image source: keprionline.blogspot.com

# Current Options for Migration V



## 4. When you win the diversity lottery

- The lottery was designed to increase the diversity of the U.S. population by granting documents to people from countries with a small number of people living in the United States.
- Citizens of countries with a high number of migrants living in the United States are not allowed to participate (Mexico, China, India, etc.).
- The requirements to participate are a high school diploma, computer skills, and some type of labor skills.

# Current Options for Migration VI

## 5. Other types of visas

- **Temporary protected status:** temporary immigration status for people whose countries are in war or have suffered a recent natural disaster
- **\*T-Visas** allow certain victims of human trafficking to remain temporarily in the United States if they assist law enforcement and testify against the perpetrators.
- **\*U-Visas** give victims of certain crimes temporary legal status and work eligibility for up to 4 years.
- **\*VAWA** allows battered immigrants to claim temporary visas when they are abused by a U.S. citizen.



*On January 2010, the DHS granted TPS to Haitians in order to assist Haiti after a devastating earthquake  
Image source:flimmigrant.wordpress.com*

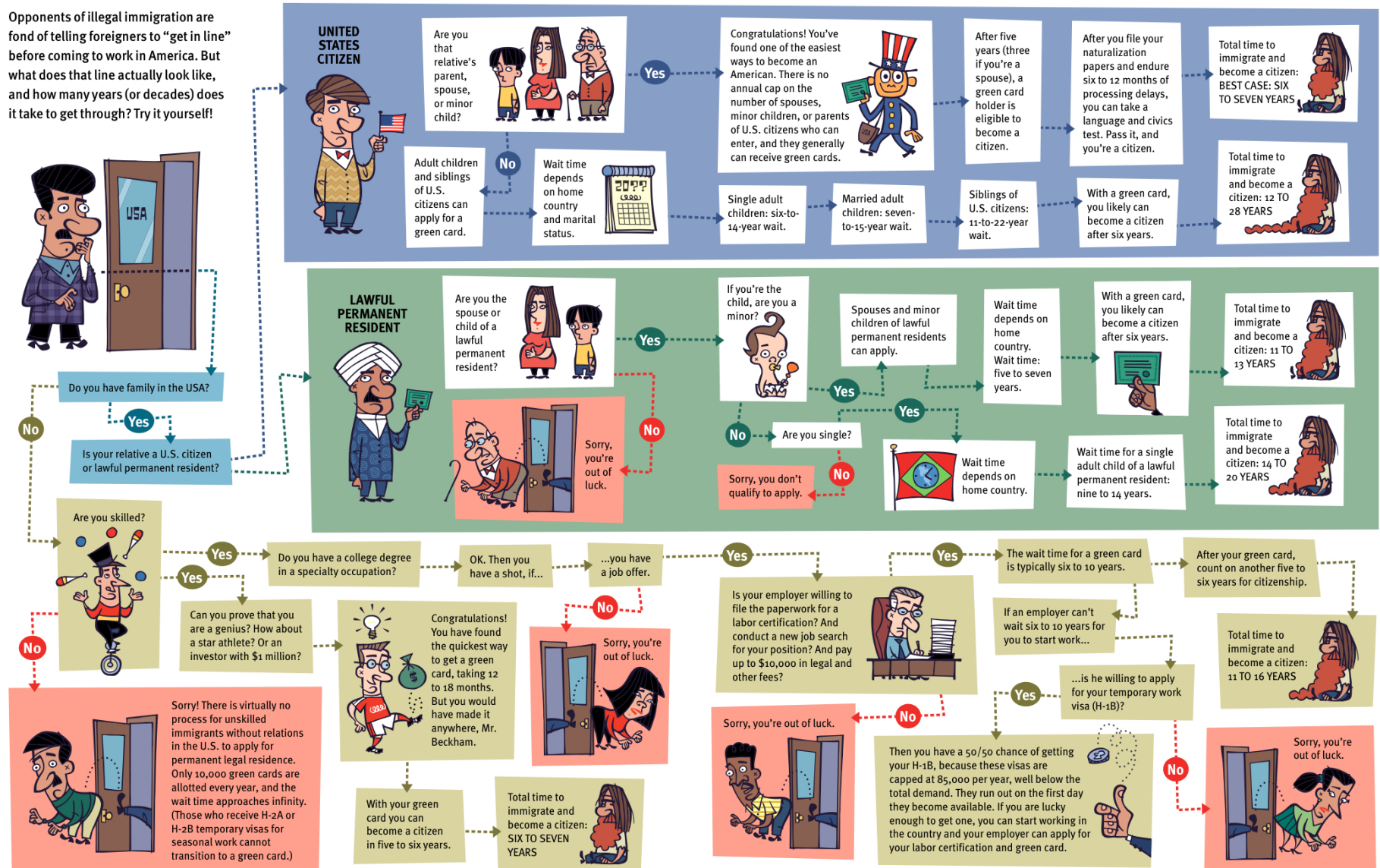
**\*These visas are important because farm workers are often targets of crimes, including human trafficking and modern day slavery.**



# What Part of Legal Immigration Don't You Understand? *Mike Flynn and Shikha Dalmia*

Illustrated by Terry Colon

Opponents of illegal immigration are fond of telling foreigners to "get in line" before coming to work in America. But what does that line actually look like, and how many years (or decades) does it take to get through? Try it yourself!



(Flynn is director of government affairs and Dalmia is a senior policy analyst at Reason Foundation. This chart was developed by Reason Foundation in collaboration with the National Foundation for American Policy.)



**"Speak out for those who cannot speak, for the rights of all the destitute. Speak out, judge righteously, defend the rights of the poor and needy."**

**Proverbs 31:8-9**

Together With Farm Workers Harvesting Justice  
National Farm Worker Ministry

