Immigrant Workers in the United States

Facts on Immigrant Workers in the U.S.

Don’t mistreat any foreigners who live in your land. Instead, treat them as well as your 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. (Lev. 19:33,34)

- 11.5 percent of the U.S. population is foreign-born totaling 32.5 million immigrants, according to the 2002 population survey.

- Immigrants provide more to the nation’s economy and government services than they take or use, adding about $10 billion each year to the U.S. economy and paying at least $133 million in taxes.

- A large proportion of immigrant families (85 percent) are mixed status (at least one parent is a non-citizen and one child is a citizen).

- Immigrant workers working full time are nearly twice as likely to make less than $20,000/year than native workers (31.1 versus 17.4 percent).

What You Can Do

- Write to your Congressional Representative and Senator, urging them to support an increase in the minimum wage from $5.15 to $6.65 per hour. This will benefit all workers, immigrants included.

Write to your Representative to support bill HR-965. (Go to http://www.house.gov to find the name and address of your Representative.)
Write to your Senator to support bill S-20. (Go to http://www.senate.gov to find the name and address of your Senator.)

- Support the Immigrant Workers Freedom Ride (see right column for full information).

- Learn more about the National Interfaith Committee for Worker Justice at http://www.nicwj.org. Keep current on worker justice issues by signing up for their newsletter and/or e-mail bulletin.

- Use the prayer service on the following page to be in solidarity with immigrant workers in the U.S. and all those working for labor rights.

Immigrant Workers Freedom Ride

Immigrant workers, living and paying taxes in the United States, want the rights to apply for citizenship, to reunify their families, and to have a voice on the job without regard to legal status, rights denied by their undocumented status and outdated laws. The road to citizenship needs a new map. The goal of the Immigrant Workers Freedom Ride is to help draw that map.

Inspired by the Freedom Riders of the Civil Rights movement, immigrant workers and their allies will set out from nine major U.S. cities and cross the country in buses in late September 2003, stopping at many locations. They will converge on Washington, D.C. October 2 to meet with members of Congress and then travel to New York City for a mass rally on October 4. Get more information about the Freedom Ride by visiting http://www.iwfr.org.

What You Can Do to Support the Immigrant Workers Freedom Ride

- Organize an interfaith worship or prayer service to welcome or send off riders.

- Find housing for a busload of riders

- Organize a congregation(s) to provide a meal to the riders.

- Recruit local religious leaders to ride a bus all or part way.

- Organize a church bus/van to ride alongside the main bus for part or all of a route.

- Talk to local religious media. Get a religion reporter to ride the bus for a day.

- Provide space for planning meetings or events.

For more information, contact the National Interfaith Committee for Worker Justice organizing director Kristi Sanford at (773) 728-8400, ext. 45 or e-mail kristi@nicwj.org.

Source: National Interfaith Committee for Worker Justice
Prayer Service for Immigrant Workers

Doers, Not Just Hearers

Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says . . . the [one] who looks intently into the perfect law that gives freedom, and continues to do this, not forgetting what [the have] heard, but doing it—[they] will be blessed in what [they do]. James 1: 22,25

Leader: As we gather together this Labor Day weekend, we recognize that we serve a God who has given us guidance in just work and in the welcoming of the strangers in our midst. Living a life acceptable to God requires good relationships with God and with our neighbors.

All: Every generous act of giving, with every perfect gift, is from above.

Leader: You call us to treat our neighbors as we want to be treated ourselves.

All: We want to be doers of the word, and not merely hearers who deceive themselves.

Leader: We know that You want all workers to be treated with respect and dignity.

All: We ask for just wages and benefits for our own families and we ask for it for others as well.

Leader: For if any are hearers of the word and not doers, they are like those who look at themselves in a mirror.

All: For they look at themselves and, on going away, immediately forget what they were like.

Leader: But those who look into the perfect law, the law of liberty, and persevere,

All: Being not hearers who forget, but doers who act—they will be blessed in their doing.

Leader: When we hear about janitors seeking better wages and benefits for their families,

All: Help us be doers who act. Help us seek justice for janitors.

Leader: When we hear about health care workers and home care workers who can’t afford health care for their own families,

All: Help us be doers who act. Help us seek justice for health care and home care workers.

Leader: When we hear about retail workers who can only work part-time so they are excluded from benefits,

All: Help us be doers who act. Help us seek justice for retail workers.

Leader: When we hear about farmworkers working long hours for low pay, sleeping in cramped housing or on the ground,

All: Help us be doers who act. Help us seek justice for farmworkers.

Leader: When we think about those whom we or people we know employ to watch our children,

All: Help us be doers who act. Help us seek justice for child care workers.

Leader: When we hear about the immigrants in our nation who often toil in the hardest jobs, pay taxes, and yet often have no path to become citizens,

All: Help us be doers who act. Help us seek justice for immigrant workers.

Leader: When we hear of loyal employees who have lost their jobs due to no fault of their own,

All: Help us be doers who act. Help us seek justice for laid off and unemployed workers.

Leader: When we know that many of our clothes and children’s toys are made in sweatshops,

All: Help us be doers who act. Help us seek justice for sweatshop workers.

Leader: Help us to remember that work is a gift of God and that each worker is created in the image of God.

All: O God, who created each one of us, who allows us to work, we give thanks for this Labor Day. We ask You to be with all those who work and are not paid wages to sustain their families. We ask Your special blessing on immigrant workers and those looking for work. Forgive us when we purchase goods made in sweatshops. Help us to seek justice for all workers. Help us be doers who act.

Amen.

Source: National Interfaith Committee for Worker Justice