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From My Point of View

Part 1: Varying Opinions About Illegal Immigrants in the U.S.

Group 1: Illegal Immigrants in the U.S.

Excerpted from Online NewsHour “Building Up the Border” on 2/15/06

http://www.pbs.org/newshour/bb/latin_america/jan-june06/fences_2-15.html

“When asked why they were making the trip, many here echoed the words of Luis Valdez. He’s a father of three from central Mexico who was about to attempt his first illegal crossing into the United States.

LUIS VALDEZ (Translated): I have to go there to work. I need to get there to get ahead a bit in life for the sake of my family.

JEFFREY KAYE: Some deportees here told us that enhanced border security has discouraged them from trying to enter the U.S. again. Other migrants said they’d go around the fences and agents and try to cross the border in more remote and dangerous areas.

Rafael Rigos, who says he’s almost died in the past crossing illegally into the U.S., is familiar with the perils.

RAFAEL RIGOS (Translated): The mountains make it easy to get lost if you don’t know the way. But the biggest danger is lack of water. If you run out of water, you’re done.

JEFFREY KAYE: Last year, nearly 500 people died trying to cross the deserts and mountains of the U.S.-Mexico border. It was the largest annual migrant death toll ever recorded by the U.S. Border Patrol.

JEFFREY KAYE: At Casa Del Migrante, migrants say as long as desperation and poverty exist in Mexico and Central America, no amount of fences will stem the human tide of illegal immigration.

RAFAEL RIGOS (Translated): You can have a third or a fourth fence but it is not going to change anything. People are going to keep coming.”

Group 2: U.S. Citizens Against Illegal Immigrants

Excerpted from Online NewsHour “Rallying for Rights” on 4/10/06

http://www.pbs.org/newshour/bb/latin_america/jan-june06/immigration_4-10.html

But these huge pro-immigrant rallies also have brought out critics.

UNIDENTIFIED MALE 1: I am tired of people coming across with impunity. We don't know who is here. We don't know what diseases they have.

UNIDENTIFIED MALE 2: There's 360 million Americans that need to start standing up for their country, before we give it away.

KWAME HOLMAN: In Tucson, Arizona, on Sunday, anti-immigrant members of a group called The Border Guardians set fire to a Mexican flag.

Excerpted from abcnews.com “Rallies Called to Make Illegals Legal” on 4/10/06
<http://abcnews.go.com/GMA/story?id=1825363&page=1&CMP=OTC-RSSFeeds0312>

“...Michelle Dellacroce, of Mothers Against Illegal Aliens, feel that American children are adversely—an unfairly—affected by this kind of illegal immigration.

‘They’re not happy with what they have in their country. They want to come here illegally and then put their children into our schools so that we pay for their children’s education and that needs to stop,’ Dellacroce said. ‘My taxes pay for the education of my children to go to that school. My children should be learning the education in the public schools in English, not in two separate languages.’

Group 3: Employers Hiring Illegal Immigrants

Excerpted from Online NewsHour “Immigration Debate” on 3/31/06
http://www.pbs.org/newshour/bb/congress/jan-june06/immigration_3-31.html

RAY SUAREZ: Dean Baker, it's a commonplace in President Bush's speeches that illegal immigrants take jobs Americans will not do; is it true?

DEAN BAKER: Well, you have to add one more clause to that: at the wages that are being offered. If you look at the situation of less-skilled workers, workers with just a high school education, particularly those who are high school dropouts, their wages have gone nowhere over the last quarter-century.

And part of that story is because they have to compete with immigrants coming in who are willing to accept those jobs at much, much lower wages. A lot of people may not be willing to take jobs at the minimum wage or a little bit above, but they would certainly be willing to take the jobs in the meat-processing factories, in restaurants, you know, go down the list of occupations where we see a lot of immigrant labors.

If those jobs offered \$15, \$20 an hour and paid health care, you would have lots of native-born workers who are very happy to take those jobs. So the story has been that we've seen the wages depressed in a large number of jobs, so, yes, native-born workers aren't willing to take those jobs anymore. But we have to get the wages up; that's the key.

RAY SUAREZ: Dan Griswold, is the president right that illegal immigrants are taking jobs that Americans will not do?

DANIEL GRISWOLD, Cato Institute: The president is right. And companies just can't raise wages willy-nilly; they're restrained ultimately by what customers are willing to pay on the other end. If wages go up, customers will turn away from the higher prices, and those industries will shrink.

You know, where is the line of Americans waiting to pick lettuce in the noonday sun all day or to scrub toilets all night at a discount store? They're just not there. This is honorable work, but it's hard work. And I think we should allow immigrants to come in and take those jobs that Americans simply don't want.

Group 4: Legal Immigrants

Excerpted from Online NewsHour “Rallying for Rights” on 4/10/06

http://www.pbs.org/newshour/bb/latin_america/jan-june06/immigration_4-10.html

KWAME HOLMAN: One of those marching in Washington today was legal immigrant Saul Soloranzo of El Salvador.

SAUL SOLORANZO, Salvadoran: Today, we are here to present our voice and our petition for a legalization program, because so many immigrants are helping this country. Our labor is needed and is recognized, but -- so, the status of the people here should be recognized.

But many on the march in Washington today argued that immigrants should be recognized for their valuable contributions to American society.

Salvadoran Jamie Guray has been in the U.S. for more than 20 years.

JAMIE GURAY, Salvadoran: We're here to protect our immigration rights and also to show that we are also contributing to this country in a major way: economically. We're a major economic force in the United States. And we -- and we contribute culturally to this society.

YANIRA MERINO: Well, I mean, we want to give a message that one of the reasons that we're out there is because we are saying, we want to be American citizens.

We're here. We work. We have families. Most likely, we are going to end up staying in this country, because we already have roots in those communities.