

Editors' Introduction

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THE SHOCK WAS UNDENIABLE. ON THE MORNING OF NOVEMBER 9, 1994, WE AWOKE to the news that 60% of the California voters around us believed that immigrant school children who could not produce the proper documentation concerning their legal status should be excluded from public schools and turned in to the INS. That was one of the landslide “messages” of Proposition 187 in California, the nation’s first immigration war zone of the 1990s. In 1996, again in California, the world witnessed the videotaped beatings of undocumented immigrants fleeing INS agents in Riverside. Was this an anomaly or a logical outcome of the criminalization of legally vulnerable undocumented immigrants as people without rights? Even the *New York Times* (which considers itself a voice of moderation) routinely reports on immigration using the discourse of “illegal aliens.” Although most of Proposition 187 is on its way to being declared unconstitutional, it did succeed in “sending a message” to Washington, and now many of its provisions are being taken up by other states and by the U.S. Congress.

In the two years since the Prop. 187 shock, a major national debate has been building over immigration. However, it is primarily a debate among advocates of immigration “reform,” that is, restrictionists: What are the most effective ways to exclude immigrants of color from the U.S. — and to punish those who are here? Should AFDC, Medicare, and housing assistance be denied only to undocumented immigrants or to all noncitizens? Should the longstanding principle of admitting immigrants to reunite families be jettisoned? How can exclusionary legislation be passed, while at the same time permitting exceptions for specific categories of skilled labor needed by high-tech corporations? Should asylum appeals be virtually eliminated as part of an (unrelated) “anti-terrorism” bill? Should the children of undocumented immigrants be barred from the public school system, in violation of a 1982 Supreme Court ruling? Should the 14th Amendment of the U.S. Constitution be repealed, in order to deny citizenship to children born in the U.S. of undocumented parents? These are among the measures receiving serious consideration in Congress.

At a time when immigrants (primarily Latin American and Asian) are once again being blamed for the problems experienced by U.S.-born working people, we are also seeing intensified right-wing and racist attacks on affirmative action

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and welfare. There is a larger process of demonizing the most vulnerable victims of economic restructuring — Latino immigrants and African-American welfare mothers, among others. Particularly in this election year, the commonly accepted wisdom is that Americans are in a “don’t bother me with the facts” mood, and the “will of the people” is to close the door to immigrants. In this climate, there seems to be very little room for intervention in the public debate by progressive voices.

Even among progressives, or those who have traditionally thought of themselves as progressives, there are many dilemmas and divisions over immigration. A 1994 California initiative for comprehensive Canadian-style health care insurance would not have covered undocumented immigrants had it been passed. Most troublesome have been the debates over the impact of new immigrants on job opportunities and availability of services to disadvantaged communities, including African-American and older immigrant communities. Economic restructuring and, above all, corporate downsizing, in which large numbers of people see their job prospects and living standards decline, have given rise to a widespread politics of insecurity. Working-class communities of color are among those facing conflicts and contradictions over these issues because they apparently do not all share the same short-range interests and their underlying common interests are less visible. What does the word “progressive” mean in relation to immigration, when some longstanding civil rights activists, even such a heroine as recently deceased Barbara Jordan, have espoused a crackdown on “illegal aliens?”

There are no simple answers: these issues cannot be wished away and need to be aired. Yet there are very few spaces in which to air them. It is one of our main objectives in this issue of *Social Justice* to provide a space for discussion and debate. Out of these discussions, we hope, can emerge a progressive agenda on immigration. What does it mean to move toward a “progressive agenda” on an issue where progressives do not all necessarily agree with each other? One premise, we suggest, is that concerns about human rights, civil rights, democracy, participation, economic rights, and social equity are legitimate starting points for the discussion about immigration — and that this is the case even in an era of economic crisis, restructuring, and downsizing.

This premise is grounded, we believe, in contemporary realities. Despite the most immediately visible concerns about job displacement, for example, economic restructuring and corporate downsizing have also created some spaces where “interests” and rights converge for many different communities. To put it another way, immigrant bashing has political and economic “spread effects” that reach far beyond immigrants of color. When proposals to repeal the 14th Amendment of the Constitution are being seriously considered, it is evident that there is a broader threat to democracy itself in the U.S. If the anti-immigrant tide and the attacks on entitlements are not stemmed, they will continue to spread beyond undocumented immigrants to affect permanent legal residents as well. We could face a scenario in which the lowest sectors of the work force are largely

composed of noncitizens, with no suffrage and limited (or no) access to social welfare. If the political, economic, and social rights and anti-discrimination protections won by U.S. workers and people of color during the 20th century are restricted to citizens, those democratic gains themselves stand to be reversed, leaving the entire U.S. working class even more vulnerable to assaults by transnational capital in the 21st century.

As we take on these issues in the 1990s, perhaps our own history can guide us. Before the 1960s, African-Americans in the South lived amid a white population that regarded them as having no rights. Yet out of the depths of their anger and despair was born the Civil Rights Movement that won important legal protections and recognition of their rights as human beings. They learned to focus and channel their anger by building a vast social movement — as we must do today. In today's world, however, a civil rights movement in the U.S. must deal with transnational realities (“globalization”) and therefore must adopt an internationalist orientation toward domestic problems. Central to its agenda should be the rights of migrants (workers as well as refugees) who move across borders.

We are beginning to see a few encouraging signs. The organized labor movement in the U.S., the AFL-CIO, which has traditionally excluded new immigrants, is for the first time recognizing that its own future is intimately tied to the future of (largely Latino and Asian) immigrant sectors of the work force and has begun a serious campaign for organizing immigrant workers in some key sectors of production and services. A pioneering example is the multi-union Los Angeles Manufacturing Action Project. This is not only a fight for the “social citizenship” rights of immigrant workers, but also potentially a path toward revitalization of the labor movement itself, building on the life experiences, knowledge, and energies that immigrants bring with them. Campaigns around concrete issues, such as universal enforcement of minimum wages and other labor standards, could also unite immigrants with other sectors of the work force, providing an alternative to the divisive politics of insecurity (higher fences at the border, etc.).

Another source of hope comes from the growing awareness within and among Latino communities that, amid often divergent interests, there are points of unity in the defense of immigrant rights. In addition, immigrant rights advocates are finding some support in other communities of color. It is to be hoped that we are seeing an incipient revival of the best that is in our tradition from the Civil Rights Movements of the 1960s. To mention only a few examples: Los Angeles has been the scene of massive demonstrations in defense of immigrants. Public service workers throughout California pledged not to comply with the provisions of Proposition 187 if it remained in effect. Texas has seen “Border Justice” campaigns at many points along its border with Mexico. Latino youth in many cities and states have shown great energy and creativity in organizing against attacks on immigrant rights. A coalition of Latino organizations is planning a massive march

to Washington, D.C., on October 12, 1996, *Día de la Raza*, in defense of the rights of immigrants and Latinos generally.

Resolving these complex issues requires the best efforts not only of immigrant rights advocates, but also of scholars and researchers. As one prominent scholar put it recently in speaking of Latin American and Latino Studies, research must “catch up with the immigration backlash” in order to affect public debate over the issue. One of our particular goals in this collection of articles, in a journal such as *Social Justice*, is to close the gap between progressive movements and progressive scholars. In addition, we hope that this collection can enrich the public debate by describing the implications of complex global processes that are redefining the parameters of state sovereignty and state control over borders. Although such analyses do not translate easily into sound bytes, they deal with realities that are transforming the lives of immigrants and non-immigrants alike for the 21st-century Americas.

Turning now to the articles in this issue, we begin with Saskia Sassen’s “Beyond Sovereignty: Immigration Policy Making Today.” Sassen argues that the demands of globalization of capital have created changes in the state, relativizing its autonomy and regulatory capacities. Drawing on examples from around the globe (Western Europe and Japan as well as the U.S.), she lays bare the dynamics shaping immigration and refugee processes and the links between the policies of receiving countries, the needs of capital, and the state’s foreign policy objectives. Her analysis reveals how the state has attempted to single out the individual and the border as sites for regulation. However, she argues, the cross-border movements of people are embedded in larger global factors that constrain policymakers, even against their will. As a result of these processes as well, the state itself is less monolithic; policy becomes the terrain for competing political pressures, hence opening up spaces for new agendas on immigration.

In “The Battle for the Border: Notes on Autonomous Migration, Transnational Communities, and the State,” Néstor Rodríguez redefines that battle as more than a simple struggle to stem the tide of undocumented migration. The late 20th century has inaugurated a new age of capitalist development; just as capital has developed new resources for its functioning, many working-class communities in peripheral regions of the world economy have, in effect, broadened their base for survival across nation-state boundaries, through autonomous undocumented migration. This process has led to the creation of transnational communities that recompose the contours of class structures and class relations through self-activity and the use of capital’s new communications and transportation technologies. After tracing the state’s strategies against autonomous migration, he questions the need for the continuing existence of rigid nation-state boundaries. The author concludes that the battle for the border will become a war for the border, as new institutional actors wear down nation-state boundaries. Undoubtedly, migrants, both legal and undocumented, will continue to play a mayor role in this develop-

ment, since the purpose of the battle for the border is not to end labor migration but to terminate its autonomous origin.

In “Gender and International Labor Migration: A Networks Approach,” Linda Miller Matthei highlights the increasing importance of women as actors in the migration process. Contrary to long-held assumptions in migration research that males are the primary migrants, she argues that there is substantial (although fragmentary) evidence that both migrant and nonmigrant women are actively involved in and central to building and maintaining the transnational networks that link migrant sending and receiving societies. She examines the contributions of world-systems analysis in bringing to light the significant economic role that female labor migrants play in the U.S. economy. Yet theoretical models that purport to explain household strategies do not fully account for women’s role in migration. She argues for an analytical approach that is more socially and culturally grounded and focuses on migration as a gendered process of transnational network building. In her view, the notion of migration as a process of network building illuminates factors such as access to employment and settlement through social networks and the persistence of transnational ties.

In raising the question, “Are Immigration Controls Ethical?,” John Isbister challenges Americans to reflect on the ethics involved in immigration issues. “Ethics” is not to be confused with interests. If we look only at interests, some Americans benefit while others can be negatively affected by immigration. Ethics, by contrast, implies a focus on the equal moral worth of all people. This is the context for his examination of basic American precepts and his theoretical evaluation of open borders versus immigration controls. He concludes by proposing an ethically defensible immigration policy based on equal moral worth of all human beings, worldwide; from this perspective, he raises provocative questions about the propensity of U.S. citizens to defend their standard of living through support of restrictionist immigration policies.

In “Rethinking Immigration Policy and Citizenship in the Americas: A Regional Framework,” Susanne Jonas addresses the multiple cross-border realities affecting U.S. immigration policies as well as their political consequences throughout the Americas. Using a multidisciplinary approach, she lays out the need for a regional framework as the context for a discussion of existing versus alternative policies. Existing U.S. “national security”-based immigration policies are of questionable effectiveness; in addition, they have antidemocratic and destabilizing effects in various sites throughout the hemisphere, including the U.S. An alternative set of policies — more in tune with current economic realities and stated U.S. political goals of promoting democracy and stability — would be based on a cross-border reconceptualization of citizenship and would recognize the accountability of states to civil society across borders and at borders. She also questions the immigration-related effects of U.S.-promoted neoliberal economic policies in the hemisphere. Finally, an alternative immigration policy would take

a positive view of and build upon the transnational networks and practices initiated by immigrants.

J.C. Malone's "Non-Stop Immigration Roller Coaster" is an experience-based story by a professional journalist and writer who recently emigrated from the Dominican Republic to Michigan. This poignant tale of his job-search odyssey is a testament to the human toll of the process, caused by anti-immigrant sentiments in the receiving society and by the particularities of U.S. racism — even in the case of immigrants who bring great human and social resources. He also adds touches of humor to this story of the sacrifices made by entire generations of immigrants so that their children may live the "American Dream."

The next two articles address the challenging issues of intergroup relations within and among communities of color in dealing with immigration. The great strength of these articles is that, rather than generalizing about the "impact of immigration" (since in any case, even economists admit that definitive macro-information does not exist), they present specific community experiences that demonstrate the complexity and variety of everyday relations, ranging from competition to collaboration. In the first of these articles, "The Chinese Suburban Immigration and Political Diversity in Monterey Park, California," John Horton uses ethnographic interviews, exit polls, and census data to research the ethnic transformation of Monterey Park (a suburb of Los Angeles), occasioned by the influx of Chinese immigrants and the ensuing economic, social, and political transformations as well as dislocation. In spite of these dislocations, some unity has been forged in a diverse community around common interests — as illustrated in the example presented here of how the community united against a card club that wealthy Chinese and old-time white sectors of the power structure wanted to build, against the wishes of the Latino and Chinese communities. He describes the players, their positions, their strategies, and the outcome in a way that suggests how diverse communities can unite around concrete common interests.

The second case study is Néstor Rodríguez' "U.S. Immigration and Intergroup Relations in the Late Twentieth Century: African Americans and Latinos." In this article, Rodríguez focuses on the arena of intergroup relations between African-Americans and Latinos from the perspective of Latino immigration. He begins by locating the arena of intergroup relations within larger structural processes related to global change and immigration. Utilizing findings from recent intergroup surveys and ongoing ethnographic research in the Houston area, he goes on to argue that contrary to some expectations, tensions and community instability are not the only resulting relations between African-Americans and Latinos in cities experiencing high immigration. He makes the case for varied modes of Latino/African-American intergroup reactions, and presents Houston as a positive counter-example to other situations, such as inner Los Angeles, which have experienced high levels of tension resulting in part from (or attributed to) immigration.

In “Treacherous Waters in Turbulent Times: Navigating the Recent Sea Change in U.S. Immigration Policy and Attitudes,” Lowell Sachs presents the view from Washington — the political pressures shaping immigration policies and debates in Congress. Now that immigrants are being viewed as a liability, he discusses the effort in Congress to “pull up the welcome mat and shut the door.” The author outlines the major pieces of legislation currently being considered in Congress. He demonstrates the ways in which politicians have exploited the nation’s fears about the economy, crime, drugs, and other such issues in garnering support for themselves and their positions in Congress — above all, in an election year. What began as an attack on “illegal” (undocumented) immigration has turned into calls for lower quotas, elimination of family reunification principles, and curtailment of services for legal immigrants.

“For an Immigration Policy Based on Human Rights,” by David Bacon, builds on the author’s grass-roots immigrant advocacy experience to counter the attack on the rights of undocumented immigrants. The author addresses the thorny issue of financial costs versus contributions made by undocumented immigrants to the system, exposing who pays and who benefits, and the ways in which the undocumented are particularly exploited because of their vulnerable legal status. After focusing on the politically expedient strategies of the Democratic Party and the Clinton administration, he traces the complex evolution of the AFL-CIO’s position on undocumented immigration, particularly in the context of a changing global economy and NAFTA. The author describes a plethora of new and exciting immigrant labor organizing initiatives, revealing the potential for immigrant workers to revitalize and strengthen the U.S. labor movement as a whole. He calls for a policy based on respect for human rights, as defined in the 1990 U.N. *Convention on the Protection of the Rights of Migrants and their Families*. In the author’s words, “Immigration is a relationship between countries, forged by people passing back and forth. The problems which this movement poses cannot be solved by the actions of one country alone...[but] must find global solutions....”

In “Right-Wing Politics and the Anti-Immigration Cause,” Sara Diamond outlines the complexities of the Right’s positions, including the fault lines within the Right *vis-à-vis* immigration policy. She points out the contradictions and strange bedfellows generated by the immigration issue in relation to the Right’s broader goals. During the Proposition 187 campaign in California, for example, the Christian right-wing coalition was not vocal, and more generally, the Christian Right has downplayed the issue of immigration in order to avoid appearing racist at a time when it was making inroads into communities of color. This stands in sharp contrast to the position of the “Paleoconservatives” and Pat Buchanan, who equate nationality with cultural/ethnic characteristics — the crude implication being that the government’s role should be to preserve the white power structure. Unlike these Paleoconservatives, the Christian Right has adopted a more moderate posture on immigration in order to win converts

(especially from communities of color) to its “core issues,” against abortion and homosexuality.

Michael Welch focuses on “The Immigration Crisis: Detention as an Emerging Mechanism of Social Control.” Detaining large numbers of undocumented immigrants is a relatively recent development in Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) policy. Until the 1980s, only those deemed likely to flee and hide or who posed a security risk were detained by the INS. Since that time, political shifts have fundamentally altered immigration policy, resulting in greater reliance on detention. This article examines the major changes in detention policy and outlines some of the injustices taking place in this increasingly repressive arena. Moreover, when INS policy is viewed in the context of “the new penology,” such policy can be understood as an important mechanism of social control.

Taken together, these articles suggest how much research and organizing remain to be done; yet we hope that this collection will contribute to the insertion of progressive voices into the public debates about immigration. The analyses presented here reveal some of the common as well as divergent interests among the communities most affected — an essential precondition for developing more broadly based and effective responses to the anti-immigrant tide. We also hope that the alternative approaches and analyses in this volume will broaden the parameters of debate, so that it is no longer simply among restrictionists, but, as it ought to be, a discussion about what kind of society the U.S. will be in the 21st century.