

Tracking Illegal Immigrants *Who is Protected?*

by Diane Lauber

Since the 9/11 attacks, new laws and **policies** have been established in the U.S. to try to help the government more easily determine who is in the country illegally. This is related to the fact that most of the 19 hijackers responsible for the attacks could have been prevented from entering the country or **deported** if immigration laws were better **enforced**.

Many of these policies are having a big impact on the lives of undocumented immigrants, but are they making us safer? Below are four examples of new policies developed since September 11th. They have been **compiled** by the Massachusetts Immigration and Refugee Advocacy Coalition.

1. Immediately after September 11th, students and visitors from Arab and Muslim countries were asked to register with the government. This policy **targeted** an entire group of people based on their religion or where they came from rather than on any **intelligence** information that **indicated** individuals were **potentially guilty** of a crime, or dangerous. Due to **public outcry**, this policy was discontinued, but not before it had **devastating consequences** for many people and their families.

Classroom discussion questions:

- Who do you think opposed this policy? Why do you think they opposed it?
- If only Arabs and Muslims opposed the policy, do you believe the government would have discontinued it?

2. There has long been discussion about what the most sensible policy would be regarding undocumented workers who have lived in the United States for years, work here and pay taxes, but do not receive the **benefits** of legal



Protesters in front of the San Francisco INS office, January 2003.

Photo by Jeff Paterson/Not in Our Name.

residents and cannot be **located** in any government files. Many people have **advocated** for creating a process so that these workers may become legal residents.

After September 11th, the Administration stopped considering granting permanent legal residency to this population. The **proposals** now being discussed are only for legalization of immigrants who temporarily work here, and would require that they return to their own country within a certain period of time.

Classroom discussion questions:

- Do you believe legalizing current workers would affect others' decisions about whether they should try to come into the U.S. illegally?
- What is the result for the United States of having a large number of workers who do not have any way to become legal and so have no access to health or retirement benefits?
- What is the result of having no system by which these people can be tracked or located by the government?

3. Legal residents who are not citizens are no longer allowed to be airport security workers, and thousands lost their jobs after September 11th. On the other hand, 30,000 non-citizens risk their lives for the United States by serving in the armed forces.

Classroom discussion question:

- How much more likely of a security threat do you believe non-citizens are to the country?

4. In Massachusetts, attention recently focused on students who are not legally in the country. A law was passed to **ensure** that they cannot receive federal loans for college or receive in-state tuition at state universities, even though they may have attended high school in the United States and have had no part in the decision to come to this country illegally.

Classroom discussion questions:

- What are the advantages and disadvantages of excluding immigrants from access to higher education?
- Who do you think supported this law?
- Do you think it likely that large amounts of taxpayer money are going to illegal immigrants attending college?

For more information visit:

Massachusetts Immigrant and Refugee Coalition: www.miracoalition.org

National Immigration Forum: www.immigrationforum.org

National Network for Immigrant and Refugee Rights: www.nnirr.org

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Definitions for this article (many words also have other definitions)

Access – the possibility of approaching or reaching a person or place, or the right to use or look

Advocate – to publicly support or suggest an idea or way of doing something

Benefit – advantage; something helpful

Compile – gather together

Consequences – the results, often bad, from a particular action or situation

Deport – to force someone to leave a country

Devastating – causing much damage or destruction

Enforce – to make people obey the law

Ensure – make something certain to happen; to secure or guarantee

Exclude – to keep out, shut out, prevent the entrance of

Indicate – to show, point, or make clear

Intelligence – secret information, especially about enemies, or conclusions based on such information

Locate – find [located – found]

Policy – a plan or set of ideas agreed to by an organization or government

Potentially guilty – possibly responsible for a crime or wrong

Proposal – suggested action

Public outcry – a strong expression of anger or disapproval by many people

Target – to direct something at a person or group (such as criticism, advertising, or a product)

Track – watch, monitor, follow