

Viewpoints: Undocumented Immigration

Editor's note: The term “illegal” as it refers to those who cross the border without documents is widely used in the current public debate. The editorial board for this issue opposes using this term to refer to human beings and feel it is important to question its widely accepted use. Please see the article on page 31 about word choices. Terms used in the following excerpts reflect the authors’ original word choice.

The views below are from student submissions we received for this issue. As you probably already know, there are lots of different opinions on what to do about the immigrants who cross the border without documents and those who already live here. As you read the viewpoints below, pay attention to the reactions you have. How do you feel as you read each opinion? What is each person saying? Can you think of reasons why they hold this opinion?

Viewpoint One

My own view, as a legal immigrant from Brazil, is that illegal immigration should not be accepted at all. The government should create an action plan to select the immigrants who have worked in the United States for at least five years, paid taxes, paid gas and light bills, and do not have criminal backgrounds and legalize their situations. The ones who do not meet these criteria must be deported. In spite of the fact that the children of some illegal immigrants were born in the United States, they should also be considered illegal.

Viewpoint Two

Most undocumented people are hard workers; they do hard jobs and get little money. They are people who work hard to support their families. I agree when the law prosecutes people who are real criminals such as people who kill other people, people who abuse children or old people, or people who want to destroy this country. But, why call someone a criminal who wakes up at five o'clock in the morning and gets ready to go to work and sometimes works more than eight hours a day? Many immigrants work 12-14 hours and then after work come back home to be with their families.

Viewpoint Three

I think the government should consider a law that permits legality to those who can prove their honesty and desire to help this country. I am sure that illegal immigrants are aware that they have broken the law coming and working here without authorization. Legally or not, all these people are already here and now they are asking for more rights, better payment for their jobs and legal residence to stay here. Instead of spending money and effort to send immigrants back to their countries, which would be almost impossible, I think the government should increase its efforts to stop people coming here illegally and risking their lives.

Looking at the Viewpoints

1. Read each of the viewpoints and decide which parts of them you agree with. Explain to others in your class your reasons.
2. Find something you don't agree with and try to argue from that perspective.
3. What views are left out?
4. Think about your own ideas: What led you to believe this? What information is it based on? What personal values support your ideas?

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