

Failing Economy Strikes Immigrants Hard

Mercedes Fukamizu

The economic crisis is very cruel. I have many friends and relatives who are having many difficulties. They are losing their jobs, houses, and dignity. One friend almost lost his life.

My friend Roger is 62 years old. He is a good person. He worked hard in two jobs. He had a good life. Today, he is in the hospital. He has been sick. He tried to kill himself because he lost both his jobs and he couldn't keep up with his mortgages or his car payments. He felt unable to be alive. His family lives in Brazil. His brother and sister will come here to help him.

I have many relatives in Japan. They went there for jobs. A lot of immigrants stay a long time in Japan to work hard every day. Now, they are working only a few hours per day and getting only a little money. My brother told me, "Many Brazilian workers lost their jobs and their homes. When they go back to Brazil, they are homeless."

My niece, Fabiana, worked three years in Japan. Her job was to make Toyota cars in a big factory. She earned good money. But she had to

go back to Brazil.

Toyota sent all immigrant workers on "vacation." They don't know when this vacation will end.

I am feeling this crisis in my life, too. My husband is not working as much as he used to. Before the crisis, my family and I went to restaurants every weekend. These days, I am cooking every Saturday and Sunday. In this difficult time, we need to be careful with our money.

The economic crisis is very hard for immigrants because we lose our jobs faster than Americans do. We are often alone in this country. We do not have the benefit of help from our families. The crisis is not easy for anyone. I hope the government will take action soon so that people will not suffer.



Mercedes Fukamizu is of Asian descent. She is from Brazil and she speaks Portuguese. She has been in the U.S. for five years. She is married and has a teenage son. This year he is starting high school. Mercedes is an ABE student at Bristol Community College. She would like to get her GED and go to college.

Take it Further

Find Brazil, Japan, and the United States on a map. Locate the country you are from, the countries you have worked, and the countries where your relatives live. What do you know about how the economy is doing in those countries?

Pretend that you are a friend of Mercedes. What would you say in a letter to her?

Make a time line showing economic issues you were dealing with before the crisis and during the crisis. Extend the time line into the future. What will it include?

Read "Not Again!" by Janet Scharbor on p. 14. Discuss what you know about global capitalism and the movement of jobs and workers from place to place.