



H-2A and Farm Workers in the Nation's Agricultural Fields

Barry Lewis¹

Immigration has a long history of regulation in the United States and Mexican workers have often been exempted from restrictive policies, with U.S. employers often relying on contract workers from Mexico. They even came to be exempted from the nation's first major restrictive law, the Immigration Act of 1917, with hundreds of thousands, if not millions, entering the U.S. to work in the nation's fields. They journeyed with the hope of one day landing a good job and establishing themselves to provide for their families both here and in their country of origin. Workers from Mexico and other Latin American countries have historically played key roles in the U.S. economy. Many came and continue to come as guest workers authorized to work only in agriculture or other manual-skilled jobs, and through this they have helped sustain the livelihoods of Americans. These workers continue to be an important component of the American economic fabric. Since the United States consistently relies on the labor of foreign workers, the government has established programs that allow these workers entry into the country to work temporarily.

Due to the labor shortages created by the Second World War, the United States partnered with Mexico to create the Bracero Program of 1942. The agreement mainly brought in

guest workers to meet the labor shortages in the agricultural industry. The program guaranteed Mexican workers basic human rights, including food and adequate housing. In practice, however, participating workers were often abused and seen as disposable commodities, with Americans often developing hostile sentiments toward them. This dynamic created an environment that perpetuated continuing injustices against migrant workers.

Currently, the H-2A Program continues to allow guest workers to be employed in the nation's agricultural fields on a short-term basis. They come not only from Mexico, but also from other Latin American countries, as well as from Africa and Asia. Similar to issues faced by Mexican workers in the Bracero Program, these workers are often promised good pay and amenities, only to arrive in the U.S and find that things are not always as they were told. Given the lack of protection by the Department of Labor, some of these workers are subject to abuses and exploitation. Some have their visas held by third-party contractors, which forces them to labor in highly dependent situations where they work 12 or more hours a day, while others are provided inadequate housing, including living in small houses without heat or running water. This article highlights the

problems that are occurring within the agricultural guest worker program known as H-2A, as well as provides some possible solutions to remedy the situation.

History of Injustice

The Immigration Act of 1917 created the first major labor agreement between the United States and Mexico. Its origins came at a time when the United States was facing a mass labor shortage due to World War I and extensive industrialization of the economy. Thousands of rural families flocked to burgeoning metropolises hoping to obtain good paying jobs at emerging factories.

However, crops still needed to be planted, fertilized, harvested, processed, and sold to American consumers. Due to the labor shortages, the U.S. government was actively looking for other labor sources. The main intent of the Act was to use literacy as a requirement to restrict immigration into the country. The Act forbade contracted labor but allowed temporary workers to enter the country to meet the labor shortages, especially in agriculture. In 1921, guest workers were allowed to work in the nation's mines and railroads. Mexican workers stepped up to meet the nation's need for cheap labor, working in agriculture, mining, and the railroads. By the 1920's, Mexican workers had become the principal workforce on many southwestern farms, which propelled American reliance on Mexican labor after the war ended.

Due to the growing dependence on Mexican workers and given the shortage of American workers, the U.S. began to recruit Mexican laborers more heavily as a way to sustain the country's economy. With the exemptions provided in the Immigration Act of 1917, Mexican laborers did not have to pay a head tax or complete literacy requirements because they were not coming in as immigrants. This helped set two important precedents, the first being the relaxation of immigration laws when it was "convenient" to import Mexican guest workers and the other being the "necessity" to restrict their entrance to the country and exclude them when they were no longer needed.

Mexican labor was and still is viewed as expendable, or as something that can be utilized when needed, but discarded when it is no longer deemed useful. The work provided by these laborers has been highly beneficial not only for developing the American economy but, equally important, for bringing food from the agricultural fields to the tables of millions of Americans across the country. Despite their hard work, however, they are still treated and viewed as exploitable people with no real place in the United States. It is important to note that both countries contributed to the "unequal" treatment of Mexican workers, even if at times Mexico attempted to protect its workers.

The American and Mexican governments facilitated this mass importation of Mexican workers, which helped establish the gatekeeper border policy that has continually allowed workers from Mexico to enter the United States when the economy is booming and prevent their entrance when the economy is stagnating or declining. The institutionalization of Mexican workers as a flexible "reserve" labor pool for the benefit of American capitalism has led to their mass deportation time and time again. During periods of nativism, these workers are portrayed as nuisances and undesirables, though the United States economy continues to depend on them even as some Americans remain hostile toward them. As a result, the use of these workers has been normalized within a prevailing context that needs them, exploits them, and degrades them. It is from this cynical viewpoint that these workers are sent back to their home countries once their contracts end. Yet, the demand for Mexican labor endures despite the political backlashes against having Mexicans in the United States. In the 1950s, Operation Wetback, the second major forced deportation that heavily targeted Mexican communities across the country did not stop America's reliance on these contracted agricultural laborers. The Bracero Program continued until 1964, nearly two decades after the end of WWII.

Bracero Program

Like the Immigration Act of 1917, the Bracero Program "opened up" the border and allowed many workers temporary access into the United States. This program was essentially an indentured servitude program that allowed Mexican agricultural workers temporary access into the United States from 1942 through 1964. The Bracero Program created and helped sustain the historical and legal precedent to exploit Mexican and Central American workers in the United States. During its existence, it is estimated that around 4.6 million guest workers were employed in the U.S. The Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) originated the program with help from the Department of Justice and the Department of Labor, and in cooperation with the Mexican government. The INS held the most power among all of these entities, as it held administrative discretion over *bracero* entries, departures, and desertions.

The mandate of the INS was to control illegal immigration without disrupting America's economic benefits of having a steady supply of farmworkers. The strategy of the INS was to convert "illegal" workers into legal *braceros*, which helped ensure farms would have sufficient farmhands to curtail their use of undocumented migrants. Even though this relationship was beneficial for both countries, the United States government had more power and ability to influence working conditions than did

the Mexican government. Mexico, though a willful participant in the Bracero Program, was rarely able to get concessions from the United States, as the U.S. government would override most provisions. This meant that when workers were sent to the United States and subjected to working long hours in poor working conditions while living in dilapidated housing, Mexico would advocate for better conditions for its workers, but the U.S. government was not always able to protect the guest workers.

Still, Mexico continued to provide workers to the States in order to benefit from the economic trickle-down effects the program provided. The program provided jobs for thousands of impoverished and unemployed Mexicans who in return sent a good portion of their wages back to Mexico, which helped feed its economy. Further, the recruitment of these workers was economically beneficial to Mexico as government officials were often bribed by aspiring *braceros*, which helped keep the government content with the program.

The American political push to incorporate Mexican workers into the U.S. economic fabric was approached with a nationalist ideology. As more and more rural populations moved to industrial areas, farmers that stayed in the rural areas began to advocate for better, cheaper labor for their fields. Farmers were allowed to rely on “waves” of newcomers, who had few other job prospects, to fill vacant farmworker positions.

Through the use of these workers, farm owner income increased as workers’ wages remained at a constant low. Landowners greatly capitalized from the use of immigrant workers and their low wages, which was the basis for their tendency to resist immigration and labor policies that would raise worker wages. Therefore, the *bracero* era was marked by a lack of farm labor reforms that contributed to the continual use and exploitation of guest workers on the nation’s fields. This was due to the growing demands of World War II that allowed government officials to overlook farm labor issues and place more emphasis on winning the war. Again, this period was marked by an increased nationalist rhetoric that prompted Americans across the nation to advocate for the continued use of “foreign” farm labor. Pleas by farmers to continue the use of *braceros* to “produce food to win the war” minimized farm labor reform efforts aimed at stopping the importation of Mexican workers, who were often used to break labor strikes by domestic farmworkers. Their pleas helped shape foreign labor policy between the United States and Mexico, as these interests helped sustain the use of Mexican workers on American farms and enlist Mexico’s support in the war effort.

Economic push-pull factors led to the initial development of the Bracero Program, but they also resulted in a significant

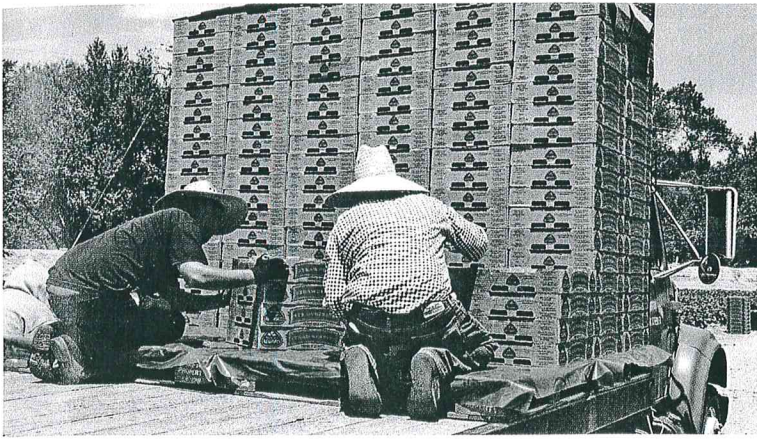
increase in immigration to the United States from countries south of the border, especially during the 1950s. It is well known that economic conditions were the main reason people sought to leave or return to their country. People are more likely to emigrate during periods of economic recession and least likely to do so when economic conditions are good. People are also more likely to move to countries with booming economies and less likely to go places where the economy is stagnant or declining. Therefore, immigration from Mexico to the United States should be understood in the context of the economic conditions of both countries.

Latino immigration to the United States increased throughout the second half of the last century, and U.S. farm labor dependence on these workers persisted. In fact, this dependence grew even stronger as farm owners sought hard-working, low-wage workers. In particular, the use of this program met the demands of farmers with labor-intensive crops, and influenced their crop production. According to Martin and Teitelbaum (2001):

...Guest worker programs are virtual recipes for mutual dependence between employers and the migrants who work for them. Employers naturally grow to depend on the supply of low-wage and compliant labor, relaxing their domestic recruitment efforts and adjusting their production methods to take advantage of the cheap labor. History has shown that in agriculture... a pool of cheap workers give farm owner’s strong incentives to expand the planting of labor-intensive crops rather than invest in mechanized labor-saving equipment and the crops suitable for it... farmers adapt in ways that ensure their continued need for workers willing to accept such low wages (p. 119).

Without the use of cheap foreign labor pools, farmers argued that their crops would be detrimentally impacted, which would have a devastating effect on the countless Americans that depended on them for their food.

The Bracero Program and the recruitment of foreign labor had other consequences on the United States as well. As mentioned before, farmers felt deeply and strongly about the foreign workers that they hired to work on their farms. Of course, in American capitalist culture, the power of a dollar and the ability to stretch it or do more with it continues to shape behavior. Additionally, this vast recruitment and hiring of Mexican and other foreign laborers meant greatly to the workers as well. Not



only were they enticed by the “American Dream,” a promised land filled with “milk and honey,” but they were also motivated to immigrate by the employment opportunities and economic stability that occurred in the post-war years. Therefore, Latin Americans began immigrating in increasing numbers to the U.S. in pursuit of a better life for themselves and their families.

History of Farmworker Abuse

Historically, abuse and exploitation have been on-going issues for migrant workers. As mentioned before, farm owners are constantly recruiting migrant workers to harvest crops that will eventually be sold to the masses of consumers. Contrary to popular belief, farm owners often have to depend on undocumented immigrants to harvest their crops. Today, this is especially the case as American workers are not interested in performing farm work. This “underground” relationship is rife for abuse as undocumented farmworkers are vulnerable to deportation and consequently are not likely to raise concerns about labor issues. Ironically, farm owners are dependent on this type of workforce and at the same time know the hidden advantages of employing undocumented immigrant workers. They have to treat workers well enough for them to return, while at the same time tempted to exploit their vulnerability. Because of their dependency, these workers are easy to control and exploit, and they rarely resist the poor working and living conditions. Therefore, employers can fully determine the work conditions and pay, and these workers must either accept these conditions or risk going without work in a foreign land.

Political and economic reasons motivate the treatment of these workers and whether or not they are abused. Their labor definitely contributes to farm production and profits, and provides low cost products to Americans. However, instead of passing legislation that would protect these valuable workers, the U.S. government ignores them and leaves them subject to deportation and to potential abuses by employers. This puts them and farm production at risk, thereby jeopardizing the nation’s food

systems. Due to their powerless status, migrant workers often have no choice but to accept abuses within the industry in order to receive their meager pay. This is especially the case when farm labor is plentiful, as has been the case at different points in time. Although there have been strike efforts on the nation’s farms by migrant workers since at least the 1930s, most were not able to get unionized or refused to unionize due to the fear of losing their job to another willing worker. Further, the success of their strikes were low due to the fact that *braceros* were used as strikebreakers in the 1940s and 1950s.

H-2A Workers

The Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986 created the program commonly referred to as the H-2A program, which allows employers to bring agricultural workers into the country on a temporary, nonimmigrant status. Today the recruitment of H-2A workers is often done by third-parties who often abuse workers by charging prohibited fees and providing inaccurate or insufficient information about jobs. This can include the inflation of wages and benefits. Additionally, some third-party recruiters have no commitment to provide what they list in their recruitment brochures. These workers often work alongside undocumented workers, who like themselves, are subject to abuses. Economic benefits resulting from reliable, low-wage foreign labor provides farm owners with incentives to continue to hire H-2A workers. Unfortunately, because the Department of Labor lacks the ability to ensure protections for H-2A workers, there have been many instances in which third-party recruiters abuse the certification process needed to validate the need for foreign labor. Further, the Department of Labor is seemingly unable to process applications in a timely manner. Farm owners dislike the process, because it is slow. On the flip side of that, however, is the incentive to shift from domestic to foreign workers to have a stable labor force. Sometimes this can result in farm owners adding unnecessary and strenuous requirements in job announcements to discourage the local labor force and thereby construct the appearance of a labor shortage.

Farm labor is very tedious, time consuming and physically intensive. In fact, according to Holley (2001), farm work is constantly ranked as one of the most dangerous occupations within the U.S., second only to mining and construction. True as this may be, however, neither farm owners nor the American government have put sufficient safeguards in place that would guarantee the protection of the farmworkers. For example, “exposure to pesticides is common in the fields, yet little is done to protect farmworkers from those hazards” (Holley, 2001:578).

Some would argue that this guest worker program is akin to slavery, one of America’s worst legacies known worldwide.

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Though slavery was abolished in 1865, the working conditions many guest workers endure are problematic and the program is seen by some as a form of modern-day slavery. According to Guerra (2004),

The injustices that persist today in agriculture 'have become ingrained in its very structure because of discrimination and greed, due in large part to the control of agricultural power structures increasingly centered in large corporations.' The greed that motivates these corporations and the agricultural industry in the United States has its roots in slavery... The United States has allowed agricultural employers to exploit farmworkers throughout its history... farmworkers are excluded from many protections that are commonly enjoyed by other workers (p. 185).

To be fair, the United States has worked to provide these workers with basic rights. For example, the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA) has been extended to migrant workers to help ensure that they have safe working conditions, but they are exempted from minimum wage and overtime pay. On paper, FLSA coverage looks good as it seemingly allows these workers an opportunity to pursue the "American Dream" while working the fields, but that is not necessarily the case. Employers have been known to pay migrant workers piece rates in which the earnings do not even amount to the minimum hourly wage. Piece rates create a gray area in which a "piece" may benefit employers, such as requiring buckets of blueberries to be filled above the brim.

When some workers become aware that their wages are not what they were promised, they seldom pursue legal action. Granted, these workers often feel powerless and are conscious of their vulnerable status in the country, which may include immigration status, ethnicity, culture, and language. As the U.S. has provided legal measures to protect these workers, whether domestic or H-2A, some employers do not want them to have contact with legal services. This serves to empower the farm owner and further disempowers the worker. Further, farm owners are often members of grower associations and other

organizations that support them by lobbying on their behalf.

Unlike domestic workers that are allowed the right to protest or file lawsuits against an employer who abuses them, guest workers, like undocumented workers, are not positioned to do so despite the protections provided them by law. As a result, these workers are often forced to deal silently with abuses and continue to work in order to get paid.

Another aspect of migrant worker abuse comes in the form of visa confiscation by third party recruiters. When a worker is recruited and sent to the States to work, they are required to have a visa and keep it at all times. This, of course, makes good sense as numerous people are deported daily due to not having proper documentation. Having their visas held by another, or having their money held by another coerces guest workers into complying with the demands of whoever has that control. That is, if they were promised to make \$11.00 an hour at a farm, but actually get \$5.00, workers are not likely to seek outside assistance.

Additionally, these workers may also fear retribution by the labor contractors or the employers, and time away from work equals lack of pay that will further harm their families back home. For example, according to Carr (2010),

... Many employers exploit the ensuing worker vulnerabilities. For example... twenty guest workers from Thailand claim they paid \$11,000 each to recruiters who falsely promised them three years of guaranteed agricultural work at \$8.24 per hour. Upon arrival, worker' passports and other documents were confiscated, they were forced to live in squalid conditions without potable water, and they were never paid for significant amounts of work... the employer confiscated plaintiffs' passports... restricted plaintiffs' travel and communication... deprived plaintiffs' emergency medical care... and generally perpetrated a campaign of coercion and fraud designed to keep plaintiffs intimidated



and unable to leave (p. 407).

This is not an isolated incident. In fact, since employers are not subjected to much official oversight, this problem occurs on several farms across the country. Hundreds, maybe thousands, of migrant and H-2A workers are subjected to abuses on a daily basis, and these abuses are seldom reported not only due to language barriers but also because these workers tend to be invisible to the public.

Basically, Americans tend to hold a neoliberal perspective that blames the victims, whether they are H-2A workers who “knew” what they were coming here for or they are undocumented farmworkers, who are blamed for “taking jobs away from Americans.” This occurs despite the fact that Americans are not lining up to harvest crops or milk cows. According to Yeoman (2001), “Although the federal government oversees wages and working conditions, farmers often mistreat H-2A workers without fear of being penalized. A six-month investigation of the program by *Mother Jones* reveals widespread complaints that growers have threatened workers at gunpoint, refused them water in the fields, housed them in crumbling rat-infested buildings where sewage bubbles up through the drains, and denied them medical care after exposing them to pesticides” (p. 42).

Except for housing and transportation, H-2A workers have to not only take care of themselves while in in this country (pay for food, pay bills, and send money back home to families, among other costs), but some also pay recruiters in order to come to this country as guest workers. This places these workers in a bind, as they are required to cover all of these costs (some of them prohibited by law) on their meager wages. According to Guerra (2004), “Regularly, workers arrive to find that they will have to provide food and basic necessities for themselves in the first days or weeks of their employment. Many have already used up the money they borrowed to get to the United States to pay recruitment and visa fees and other travel expenses. They are forced to borrow money from the grower, starting a cycle of debt and unlawful deductions from their pay” (p. 205).

In addition, guest workers are forced to navigate a land that is not familiar to them and to deal with people that look down upon them or mistreat them due to language barriers, appearance, and their socioeconomic status, not to mention the pervasive racism that is part of this society. “Like African slaves in early America, H-2A workers from the same family or village in Mexico are usually placed on different farms and are separated by large distances. This exacerbates the workers’ lack of connection with the outside world, leaving them dependent on their employer for housing, meals or groceries, or transportation



to banks, to churches, to obtain social or medical services, or to make phone calls to their families in Mexico” (Guerra, 2004:206).

Clearly, the greed that motivated Americans back during slavery to disenfranchise, abuse, and discard black people operates today. Recruiters and farm owners disempower immigrant and H-2A workers while making them dependent in order to benefit from their labor, and then they send them back to their countries of origin. Likewise, Guerra (2004) points out that in order for slave owners to keep their wealth and power, they had to develop a system of physical and psychological control to maintain their labor supply.

Today, the types of controls employers use vary. Workers continue to detail countless horror stories about the abuses they have experienced on farms and in surrounding communities throughout the nation. That is, migrant and H-2A workers face a plethora of abuses and injustices on a daily basis because of the color of their skin and their country of origin. In many instances they are viewed as subhuman. According to Guerra (2004),

Since H-2A workers do not usually have access to their own transportation, they may have to walk miles from their isolated camp to the nearest convenience store... to take care of necessities. H-2A workers are often assaulted along highways and roads by locals who know that Mexican farmworkers walk with pockets full of money to stores to wire their earnings home to their families in Mexico. H-2A camps have also been the target of break-ins and robberies. Growers, too, rob H-2A workers of their deserved earnings by cheating on work records and ‘shaving off’ hours (p. 206).

These injustices are clearly huge problems that have detrimental effects on countless guest workers in America.

Not only do some of these workers have to deal with the psychological impact of the abuses they face at the hands of recruiters, their employers, and hostile community members, they also have to deal with the physical harm that comes with

the work that they perform. If the physical abuse does not come directly from the hands of their employer, it may come from their negligence to provide workers with safe working conditions, including regular exposure to toxic pesticides and other dangerous chemicals. Not only this, but workers also have to labor in the fields for hours on end, with some of them unable to take water breaks. The physical toll this type of work has on a body can be very dangerous and the lack of concern for their health on the part of some employers makes it much worse. There is a clear need to ensure that the protections provided by this program are secured by the Department of Labor. Granted, American families benefit from the work performed by these workers on a daily basis when they enjoy their dinners, but the misery of these workers is not evident or known to them. There must be real changes made with this program in order to eliminate the abuses these workers face daily as guest workers in our country.

Solutions to the Problem

Though these problems have been ongoing and although the United States government has taken measures to protect migrant and H-2A workers, there is much more that can be done to ensure the fair treatment, safety, and pay of these workers. One of the main solutions has to come from the legislature, which must fund the Department of Labor at levels where it can have the necessary personnel to ensure that agricultural employers meet their contractual obligations to H-2A workers, adequately enforce protections, screen employer requests for guest workers, and share data on violators with other agencies. If the United States ensures better enforcement of legal protections for these workers with the guarantee that their voices would be heard and that there would be consequences for their abusers, this would equate to real change within the H-2A program.

Another solution could come from employers who should invest in their workers prior to their arrival to ensure that they have the facilities to provide adequate housing that allows for healthy living conditions. They can also invest in production processes that provide safe working conditions for their workers. The Department of Labor should be vigilant in ensuring that third parties are not exploiting guest workers by charging illegal recruitment fees and forcing these workers into debt bondage. Additionally, employers should do their due diligence before entering into agreements with third party recruiters to ensure that they are not empowering dishonest parties. This would minimize the exploitation of workers, and as employers communicate how important they are to farm operations, workers would feel more empowered to speak up when a third party recruiter commits



injustices. Farmers could also offer amenities to their workers knowing that their well-being translates into more productive workers and more efficient operations.

Another measure that can be taken to address the problem of abuse across American farms is to provide better access to legal assistance to these workers regardless of their immigration status. It has been noted that employers often dissuade workers from seeking legal advice and in some cases employers remove workers' visas to control them. These workers live with a sense of fear as they are in a new country that speaks a different language and operates differently from their own. It is known to workers that if they are viewed as making trouble they could be sent back to their countries of origin without completing their terms of employment. As a result, when workers face abuses, they are not likely to seek resolutions as they know the consequences if they speak up.

Lawyers, legal groups, and legislative advocacy groups can also play major roles in addressing the abuses migrant and H-2A workers face daily. The majority of migrant workers shy away from any contact with legal services for fear that their H-2A or immigration status will be questioned and result in their removal. In order to counter this vulnerability, it is the responsibility of these support groups to make their presence known to migrant workers on farms across the United States. This can come in the forms of camp visits and pamphlets in the native language of the workers that are distributed upon their arrival. These pamphlets should detail their rights and responsibilities as workers and provide agency contact information so that workers can reach out in case of any trouble.


It is important that these groups be strategic in their approaches to address the abuse of these workers. This includes application of the law in support of both H-2A and undocumented workers. Vivian (2005) states that

“... scholars have suggested the creation of a direct damage claim for violations of the Thirteenth Amendment's prohibition

on slavery... A claim under the Thirteenth Amendment functions similarly to an ordinary tort claim. Both actions are concerned with the prohibition of undesirable conduct and the desire to compensate an injured person. A constitutional claim for damages under the Thirteenth Amendment is an appropriate action in the case of forced labor because it analogizes an employer's actions to involuntary solitude, debt bondage, or slavery. Therefore, the availability of a constitutional remedy would contain a certain degree of moral significance and would validate the worth and importance of the undocumented worker bringing the claim" (p. 211).

Several other changes must be made in this regard to hold third party recruiters and employers accountable for mistreating and exploiting these workers. It would require members of the legislature to look deep within themselves and create new legislation that protects the human and labor rights of all workers in this country, whether they are temporary or undocumented. The law must be made to hold these parties liable for abuses they perpetrate on vulnerable workers. Legislators should no longer be able to willfully blind themselves to these injustices, and the Department of Labor must be more diligent in enforcing the legal protections afforded to these workers. Legislators must alter their existing views and knowledge on these issues and pass legislation providing punitive measures for those who would violate their contractual obligations to H-2A workers and thereby hold them accountable for the injustices that occur within the program.

There is a huge need to assist migrant farm workers across the country and there is much more that can be done to guarantee the rights of these workers that come to work on farms across the country. Americans must no longer view these workers and the work they perform as mere commodities. In order to truly claim to be the land of the free, legislators and farm employers across the country must be held accountable for the poor treatment and exploitation of guest and migrant agricultural workers. The American government must hold recruiters and employers accountable in accordance with existing policies put in place to protect migrant workers, whether documented or not. Americans must abandon their elitist nationalist ideology that dehumanizes these workers and appreciate the benefits that they and the country have reaped over the past century from their labor. The lives of these workers matter as much as the food they produce, and they must be protected as we seek to

achieve a higher civilization. 

Endnotes

¹Barry Lewis is completing the requirements for the Masters of Social Work at MSU, and plans to earn a doctorate degree in Social Work. He is currently a research assistant at JSRI.

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Dreams and Nightmares: Immigration Policy, Youth, and Families

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The election of Donald Trump to the U.S. Presidency is a reflection of this sentiment as his supporters were enthralled with his plans to build a wall to deter "illegal" immigration from south of the border. Using a nationalist platform that used fear as a driving force while rejecting the constructive changes and the economic contributions of the Latin American immigrants, he was able to mobilize a near-majority popular electorate to support him. Trump, the candidate, presented a very simplistic picture of immigration that cast those who are undocumented as criminals, drug dealers, rapists, and gang bangers. With this perspective, the nightmares of deportation that Zatz and Rodriguez write about are becoming more and more real, and the dreams for citizenship are quickly vanishing. *Dreams and Nightmares: Immigration Policy, Youth, and Families* is great addition to the body of knowledge on the complexities of the nation's immigration problems, and it captures a brief moment in history that, given the recent changes in administrations, can serve as a guide in emphasizing humanitarian and compassionate values in the midst of the current aggressive yet misguided approach to immigration challenges created by the trade policies of the United States. 