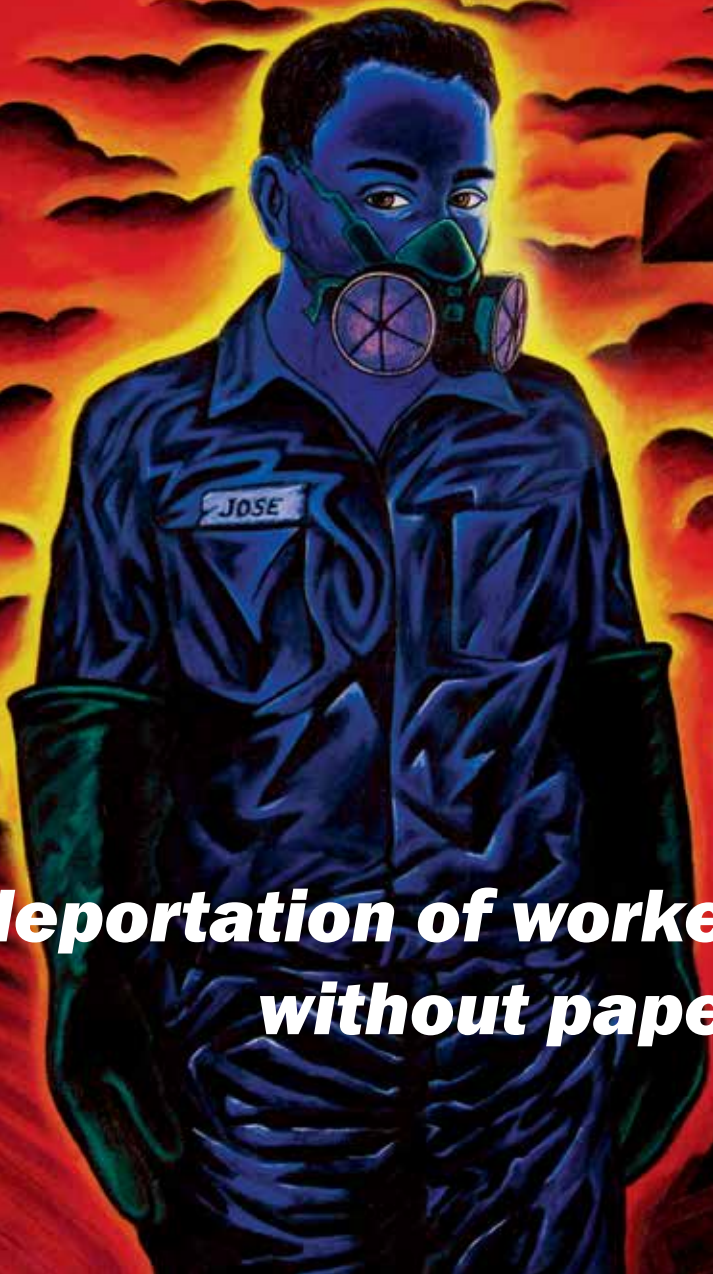


SINCE WHEN HAS WORKING BEEN A CRIME?

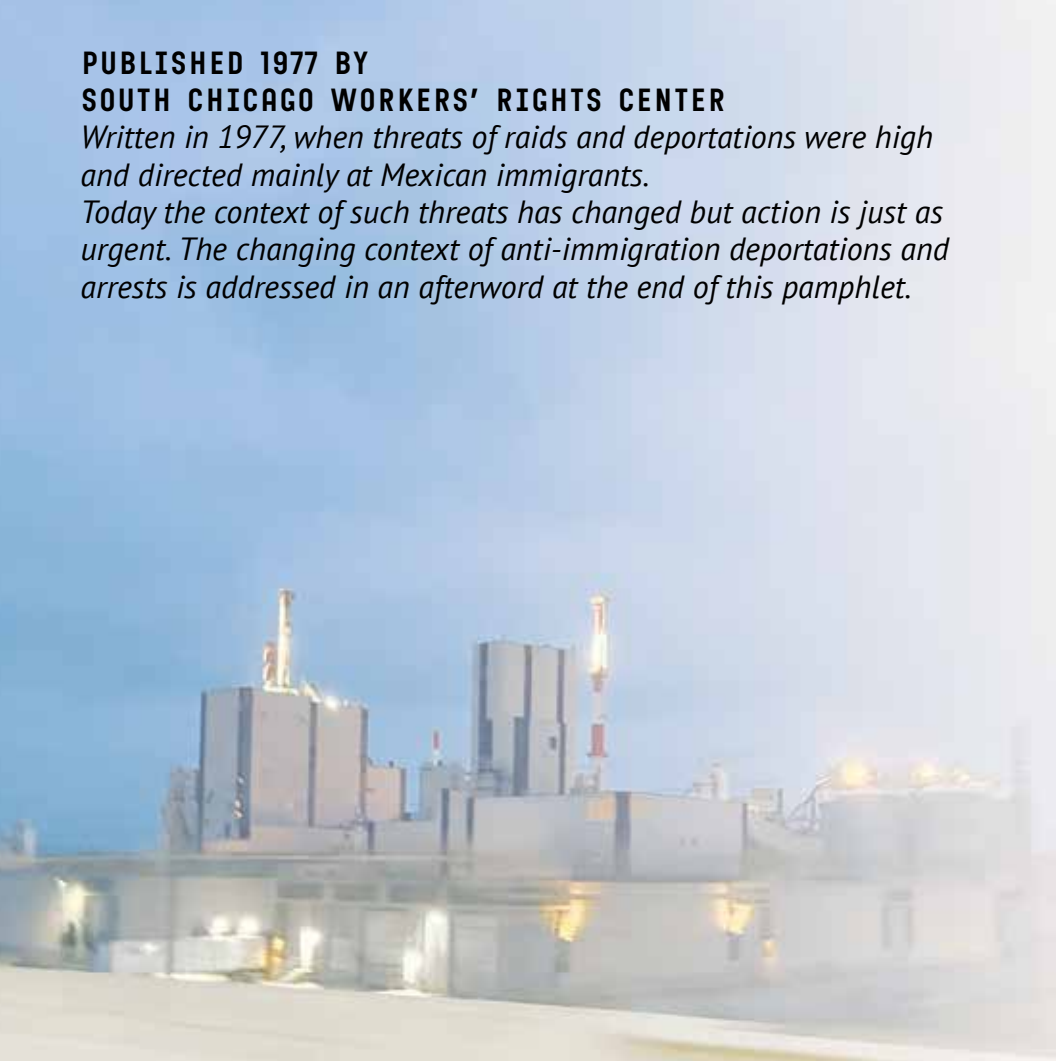


***the deportation of workers
without papers***

**PUBLISHED 1977 BY
SOUTH CHICAGO WORKERS' RIGHTS CENTER**

Written in 1977, when threats of raids and deportations were high and directed mainly at Mexican immigrants.

Today the context of such threats has changed but action is just as urgent. The changing context of anti-immigration deportations and arrests is addressed in an afterword at the end of this pamphlet.



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Cover Art:
Cuello Azul
by Oscar Moya

NEWS FROM THE PLANT

When Frank Stewart came to work early Tuesday morning, he punched in and went up to the locker room to change clothes.

“Where were you yesterday?” asked Joe Williams, who changed at the next locker. “Don’t you know we work on Mondays around here?”

“I had to go to court to fight a speeding ticket.

First they kept me waiting half a day. Then I had to look at this stupid movie about how to drive.”

“You missed some real excitement around here,” said Joe. “The government pulled a raid.”

“What do you mean, a raid?”

“Just what I said,” Joe answered. “A raid. Around 1 four guys in suits came in and started asking questions. ‘Where were you born? Where are your papers?’ Questions like that. As soon as some of the people in packing saw what was happening, they took off. Man, you never saw anyone disappear so fast.”

“No kidding? Where did they go?”

“I don’t know. Out the door. Behind the boxes in 114. In the can. Maria told me one lady in her department hid out in the garbage pail.” Frank was starting to get the picture.

“Who were these guys?”

“Bill, the union steward said they were agents from the INS-Immigration and Naturalization Service. They were looking

for people in this country without papers.” Frank was disappointed he’d missed the excitement.

“Wouldn’t you know I’d pick that day to be off. How come I always miss all the fun?”

Joe looked serious. “It wasn’t much fun. I saw them hassling Julio -the Puerto Rican over in assembly. They were really giving him a hard time—making him show his “papers”. And he’s a citizen, so he hasn’t got “papers.” They were calling him a liar. Pushing him around. They wouldn’t believe he was Puerto Rican. They kept asking him if he got here by bus.” Joe clearly didn’t think much of the way the agents acted.

“They were pulling every person who looked like they were Mexican off their lines and hassling them. They even stopped Steve, and he’s Japanese. This one agent kept talking to him in Spanish. The place was crazy—people running all over; lines backing up; everyone getting all shook up. The only departments that weren’t touched were the ones where almost everyone’s white.”

“Did they catch anyone?” Frank asked.

“When I saw them leaving they had Juan Lopez and Eliseo that works in packing. And they had one of the Spanish women from assembly. I think her name is Mercedes. The foreman said they were here without papers. I guess they’ll all be put on a bus back to Mexico.”

“Why, some of those people have been here for years. Two of Juan’s kids were born here. And just last week he was telling me about the plans for his son’s christening.”

“Maybe so,” said Joe, “but the christening will have to take place in Mexico, because he’s gone from here.”

Frank finished changing his clothes. He didn’t say much for the rest of the day, but he listened to other people talking. Some of the conversation was about the raid of the day before. People wondered if there were others without papers in the plant besides the three they caught.

That night, after Frank and his wife, Joyce, had put the children to sleep, they sat around talking. He told her about the raid.

“It doesn’t seem right,” she said. “Those people have been in the plant working like everyone else. Juan’s wife just had a baby. How will they live with three kids and him losing his job? And both of them being sent back?”

“I don’t know. Some of the guys were saying it was a good thing that they got the three of them, because it will mean more jobs for Americans. That makes sense. It’s hard enough to get a job now.”

“Isn’t Juan the one you used to trade food with?” Joyce continued.

“That’s right. He’d give me tacos from home sometimes, and I’d give him some of my lunch. He really likes your meat loaf.”

Frank thought for a minute. “The other thing some of the guys were saying is that the Mexicans who are here illegally

don’t pay taxes and are a drain on the economy. I read something about that in the *Tribune* last week.”

“How could Juan not pay taxes?” Joyce asked, frowning. “That’s ridiculous. The company deducts taxes from his check the same as they do from yours—before you even see the money.”

They both sat quietly for a minute, before Joyce continued.

“YOU’D THINK THAT A RICH COUNTRY LIKE THIS WOULDN’T HAVE TO TURN AWAY ANYONE LOOKING FOR HONEST WORK.

AFTER ALL, THERE ARE PLENTY OF THINGS THAT NEED DOING.”

The incident at the plant that Frank and Joyce Stewart talked about was only one of many such incidents all over the country. It is estimated that there are from six to twelve million people living in the U.S. without what the government calls “proper papers.” They come from all over—from Canada, from Hong Kong, India and Greece, from Jamaica and Haiti—but the largest number come from Mexico.

WORKERS WITHOUT PAPERS

Why do they come? The answer, in most cases, is simple: a chance to work. And work they do, in agriculture, food processing and serving, clothing manufacture, transportation—wherever productive labor is carried on.

The argument is often made that the undocumented workers don't pay taxes. Exactly the opposite is true. Joyce Stewart was right when she pointed that out to Frank-Juan Lopez' employer withheld federal and state taxes from his paychecks. When Juan was returned to Mexico he was unable to recover the excess in income tax he paid during the course of the year. And taxes aren't the only losses suffered by people forced by the U.S. Government to leave. There is the money the employer takes out for social security. If people are forced to leave they lose it all. Even if they stay, they can't collect social security for the time they were here without papers. People also lose bank accounts, furniture, and other household goods and personal belongings—everything that can't be packed up and put on a bus with them.

There are other losses as well. Greedy lawyers charge all kinds of money to "defend" victims of immigration arrests. In the end, the people have to leave anyway, and they leave a lot poorer than before the lawyer took their money. Similarly there is the problem of notaries. In Mexico, a notary is almost like a lawyer: someone people go to for certain legal services that do not require actually going to court. In the U.S., anyone with \$15 can be

a notary. But since the Spanish word is similar —notaria—and since unscrupulous notaries with neon signs outside their neighborhood offices are able to attract people with immigration problems, many notaries do a large illegal business. They steal money from people and give back false promises or simple services that are available at low cost, if the people only know where to look for them.

People without proper papers suffer other financial losses as well. There is the money that some pay to contractors for jobs and false papers. Not everyone does this, since not everyone has the money or the connections. But there are many contractors or middlemen who fix workers up with papers and jobs, in return for big sums of money. If these workers get caught by the immigration agents, they lose the money they put up for the jobs and papers, as well as everything else.

There are personal losses. Families are broken up by the immigration laws. The U.S. Constitution says that any person born here is a citizen. This means that many undocumented workers have children who are citizens. If children are old enough to stay and work, they may choose to stay and support the family when it is sent back. Or the child may go back with the family and then return when it is old enough to work. Also, it is very common for sisters and brothers to be separated by the immigration laws.

SO WHY, WITH ALL THESE PROBLEMS AND RISKS, DO PEOPLE COME?

AS WE SAID BEFORE, THE ANSWER IS SIMPLE: A CHANCE TO WORK

Because he didn't have papers, Juan Lopez was forced to take a low paying job with little union protection. Some are more fortunate and manage to get jobs in high paying industries like auto and steel. Most, however, have to settle for the \$2.50/ hour jobs: in unorganized factories, in service stations, in restaurants. And the lowest paying jobs in this country are usually the hardest, the hottest, and the dirtiest. In addition to the problems resulting from lack of official documents, Juan, like other workers of color, was a victim of the system of U.S. white supremacy: discrimination based on skin color.

Furthermore, he had to survive the discrimination against him because his first language was Spanish. Not many employers will hire people who don't speak English—even when the job has nothing to do with speaking English, or any language for that matter. And in many jobs, if there are white people willing to do the work, other workers don't get hired. So Juan and his family faced double discrimination: color and language.

Besides discrimination at work, people like Juan live in constant fear and uncertainty. They know that if the immigration officials catch up with them, what little amount of financial security they've found will be taken away. Anything can lead to being caught: a raid, a fight with a neighbor, sending a child to school, a speeding ticket or just walking down the street and being Mexican.

Raids and other forms of harassment are still common despite the government's claim that they are no longer doing this. In and near the community of South Chicago, there have been recent raids on local restaurants and numerous work places such as Republic Steel, Jay's Potato Chips, Solo Cup and two local hospitals. In the case of the hospitals, supervisors called an "employees meeting" and once the workers were assembled, the doors of the meeting room were closed and the immigration officials were brought in.

Even workers with proper papers are hassled as the government is liable to stop any Mexican or person of color, trying to find "illegals." Being caught means jail, until the victim can put up \$500 to \$1500 in bond, or until that person is on the bus to Mexico.

CAN'T THEY FIND WORK IN THEIR OWN COUNTRY?

Often the answer is no, and one of the reasons for that is U.S. business. The border between Mexico and the U.S, which is closed up tight to Mexican workers who want to come north, is wide open to U.S. corporations running away to Mexico. Large corporations like to boast how their investments help underdeveloped countries grow in industrial strength.

The truth is a lot different. When U.S. corporations enter a country like Mexico, they provide jobs for just a handful of people—at the cost of distorting and retarding economic growth of the country as a whole. Thus, Mexico has been unable to develop many of the basic industries vital to any independent country because the new business enterprises are crushed by giant U.S. agricultural, auto, pharmaceutical and other monopolies. When U.S. corporations invest money, large profits are sent back to the U.S., to the banks and share-holders of the corporation. Thus, money is drained out of Mexico and many other countries of Asia, Africa, the Caribbean and South America, enriching the wealthiest segments of U.S. society.

WHEN THE LOPEZ FAMILY CAME NORTH LOOKING FOR WORK, THEY WERE SIMPLY TRYING TO FOLLOW THE MONEY THAT THE YANKEE EXPLOITERS HAVE TAKEN FROM THEIR COUNTRY.

DISCRIMINATION IN THE U.S.: WHAT ABOUT MEXICO?

Another problem that these U.S. corporations in Mexico create for workers is the language problem. The companies often want their employees, especially those in office jobs, to speak English. And because these companies want English speaking workers, Mexican schools want English speaking teachers. Since the arrival of U.S. business interests in Mexico, speaking Spanish is not good enough for many jobs. So people come here to learn English while they work, in hopes of some day landing a better job back home. It is doubly aggravating to Mexican workers here to have to put up with the argument “If they live here they should speak our language”, when even in their own country, its getting to be important to speak our language.

COMPETING FOR JOBS: THE TRUTH ABOUT IMMIGRATION LAWS

Many workers just stay a few years in this country, before returning home. Others, like Juan, settle here and raise families. Do they compete with “American” Workers for jobs? Of course they do. Under the present system, all workers compete for jobs. But we think there is something wrong with the idea that competition of workers is more important than their contribution.

\$200 Reward.

RANAWAY from the subscriber, on the night of Thursday, the 30th of September,

FIVE NEGRO SLAVES,

To-wit: one Negro man, his wife, and three children.

The man is a black negro, full height, very erect, his face a little thin. He is about forty years of age, and calls himself *Washington Reed*, and is known by the name of Washington. He is probably well dressed, possibly takes with him an ivory headed cane, and is of good address. Several of his teeth are gone.

Mary, his wife, is about thirty years of age, a bright mulatto woman, and quite stout and strong.

The oldest of the children is a boy, of the name of FIELDING, twelve years of age, a dark mulatto, with heavy eyelids. He probably wore a new cloth cap.

MATILDA, the second child, is a girl, six years of age, rather a dark mulatto, but a bright and smart looking child.

MALCOLM, the youngest, is a boy, four years old, a lighter mulatto than the last, and about equally as bright. He probably also wore a cloth cap. If examined, he will be found to have a swelling at the navel.

Washington and Mary have lived at or near St. Louis, with the subscriber, for about 15 years.

It is supposed that they are making their way to Chicago, and that a white man accompanies them, that they will travel chiefly at night, and most probably in a covered wagon.

A reward of \$150 will be paid for their apprehension, so that I can get them, if taken within one hundred miles of St. Louis, and \$200 if taken beyond that, and secured so that I can get them, and other reasonable additional charges, if delivered to the subscriber, or to THOMAS ALLEN, Esq., at St. Louis, Mo. The above negroes, for the last few years, have been in possession of Thomas Allen, Esq., of St. Louis.

WM. RUSSELL.

ST. LOUIS, Oct. 1, 1847.

A PAGE FROM HISTORY

Workers without papers, like immigrant workers generally—be they from Africa, Europe, South America or the East—have built the railroads, dredged the canals and dug the mines that have given this country the mightiest industrial base on earth. With so many more tasks waiting to be performed, the country cannot afford to turn away those who come from other lands looking for work. The contribution that the immigrant workers, including those without official papers, have made in the U.S. is enormous: a lot greater than the contribution made by those who are seeking to deport them.

When the Lopez family came north

looking for work, they were simply trying to follow the money that the yankee exploiters have taken from their country.

Under the present system all workers compete for jobs. But we think there is something wrong with the idea that competition of workers is more important than their contribution.

Whenever we have high unemployment, those representing the interests of big business attempt to cover up their own responsibility for this situation by blaming working people. As the U.S. unemployment rate rose in the last five years, new laws were introduced to the Congress which were designed

to blame Mexican workers for the U.S. economic troubles. One of these laws, the Rodino Bill, was defeated due to the united opposition of many people who understood its unjust-ness and the dirty trick behind it.

However, a number of states have enacted similar legislation and others are attempting to do so. Furthermore another bill, called the Eilberg Law, was sneaked through the U.S. Congress to replace the Rodino Bill. Among other things, the Eilberg Law reduces the annual quota of Mexicans legally entering the U.S. from 43,000 to 20,000.

It also changes the status of parents with children born in the U.S. by making them wait until the child is 21 before they can get the papers which would make them legal residents. This provision makes many more people liable for deportation and divides families. Such laws must be resisted and stopped. But it is even more important to resist all efforts to deport working people who are simply trying to work for the money that is being drained out of their country by U.S. corporations.

FRANK AND JOYCE STEWART DIDN'T KNOW IT, AND NEITHER DO MOST PEOPLE, BUT THERE IS A PRECEDENT IN HISTORY FOR THE KINDS OF REACTIONARY DEPORTATION LAWS THAT ARE BEING ENACTED AGAINST WORKERS WITHOUT PAPERS NOW.

In 1850, when slavery still existed throughout the U.S. South, Congress passed the Fugitive Slave Law. This incredible law was designed to stop the steady stream of slaves escaping to the North.

It provided for fines and prison terms for anyone sheltering refugees from slavery. Suspected runaway slaves could be arrested on request, or on sight, without a warrant and turned over to a claimant, on nothing more than the claimant's word that he was the owner.

It was all perfectly "legal"—just like the deportation hearings are today. A person would be arrested and brought before a judge. In about one minute, the person would be charged, the owner would testify the victim was "his" slave, and the so-called trial would be over.

THE APPEAL THE SLAVE HOLDERS MADE TO ENLIST NORTHERN SUPPORT FOR THE FUGITIVE SLAVE LAWS WAS IN MANY WAYS LIKE THE ARGUMENT PUT FORWARD TODAY BY THE U.S. GOVERNMENT FOR DEPORTING UNDOCUMENTED WORKERS.

The slaveholders—the biggest and cruelest exploiters of labor of their time—painted themselves as heroes and champions of white labor.

They boasted that they were protecting white people from competition for jobs by black laborers.

**“AFTER ALL,”
THEY ARGUED,
“AS LONG AS BLACK
FOLKS ARE WORKING
WITHOUT WAGES ON
THE PLANTATIONS, THEY
CAN’T TAKE AWAY WHITE
PEOPLE’S JOBS.”**

These arguments were exactly backwards. They were answered very well by Frederick Douglass, a brilliant man and a former slave himself. He showed that it was slavery, not black people, that degraded free labor.

**AS LONG AS BLACK
PEOPLE WERE FORCED TO
WORK WITHOUT WAGES
ON THE PLANTATIONS,
NOBODY’S WAGES—BLACK
OR WHITE—COULD RISE
VERY HIGH.**

Unfortunately, few from the ranks of white laboring people heeded Douglass’ wise words. Just like today, most white workers attached way too much importance to the benefits they received for being white. Then, they focused on the benefits of being free: as bad as things were for them, at least they weren’t slaves.

Today they focus on their relatively better jobs and housing; on their nicer neighborhoods and better schools.

What they ignored was—and still is—the most important thing of all.

**AS LONG AS THE
CORPORATIONS AND THE
GOVERNMENT CAN KEEP
WHITE PEOPLE HAPPY
AND QUIET WITH THEIR
LITTLE PRIVILEGES, THEY
CAN KEEP THE WHOLE
WORKING CLASS UNDER
THEIR HEEL.**

At the passage of the Fugitive Slave Law, fear and dread spread through the black population of the North, where it was estimated that more than 50,000 fugitives had taken refuge from slavery.

Would they be caught? Would they be found, even after years of freedom? Would Congress come up with new laws making northern blacks slaves, as well?

Some fled to Canada. At the same time, resistance developed. Lots of it.

Opponents of slavery condemned the law, declaring that the slaveholders were attempting to turn citizens of the republic into slave catchers. They held public assemblies to marshal opposition. They formed anti-slavery societies and circulated petitions. And they made bold, heroic efforts to rescue fugitives, in open defiance of the law. Armed clashes broke out between the slave catchers and defenders—black and white—of fugitive Slaves.



ANTHONY BURNS



NIGHT ATTACK ON THE COURT HOUSE.

RESISTANCE GROWS

An outstanding example of direct resistance to the Fugitive Slave Law was the case of Anthony Burns.

On May 24, 1854, Anthony Burns, who had learned to read and write in slavery, was arrested in Boston as a fugitive slave, put in irons, and placed under guard in the federal courthouse.

The guard was a posse of special police, one-third of whom were known thugs with prison records. News of the arrest spread fast.

The next day, three lawyers came to court to defend him: Charles M. Ellis, a member of the Boston Vigilance Committee, which was organized to protect the rights of black people; Richard Henry Dana Jr., author of *Two Years Before the Mast*; and Robert Morris, the city's most respected black attorney.

The next night, during a gathering nearby of citizens to protest Burns' arrest, a man cried out,

“WHEN WE GO FROM THIS CRADLE OF LIBERTY, LET US GO TO THE TOMB OF LIBERTY— THE COURTHOUSE!”

And go they did. The crowd stormed the courthouse and battered down the door, attempting to rescue Burns. The attack was repulsed by armed constables and deputies, but one deputy was killed in the process.

Black people gathered around the courthouse and stood vigil around the clock.

Knowing it was impossible to win Burns' freedom in court, abolitionists and black people raised \$1,200, his “price”, and tried to buy his freedom.



MARSHAL'S POSSE WITH BURNS MOVING DOWN STATE STREET.

\$40,000 FOR A SLAVE

The U.S. Attorney, however, refused to allow this transaction, arguing that the Fugitive Slave Law required Burns' to be returned to his owner in Virginia. Of course, Burns did lose the legal battle.

When he was to sail to Virginia a few days later, 22 military units were called up to make sure he didn't escape. A cannon was mounted in front of the courthouse.

50,000 shouted "SHAME" as they watched the Boston police and the U.S. Army march Burns to the docks. The town was draped in black. At one point, the crowd tried to break through a police cordon to rescue Burns, but they were forced back.

Although Anthony Burns' market value was \$1200, it had cost the government more than \$40,000 to return him to his owner.

Back in Virginia, the Richmond *Enquirer* printed an account:

"We rejoice, but a few more such victories and the South is undone."

There were other slave rescue attempts, and some were successful. On February 15, 1851, waiter Fred Wilkins, or Shadrach, as he was known, was seized from his job and rushed to the Boston courthouse.

While Shadrach was still in court, a group of 50 black people from the neighborhood pushed into the courtroom, lifted him in the air, and spirited him to a carriage.

Shadrach and his rescuers moved away "like a black squall." The rescue was so fast, nobody even pursued Shadrach. His rescuers were all eventually found not guilty by a sympathetic jury.

From the beginning, black people made up the main force in the resistance to slavery. They operated on the universally recognized principle that people fighting for their freedom must themselves strike the first blow. The Civil War began with

both sides fighting for slavery—the South to take it out of the Union, the North to keep it in. It was the noble efforts of the black people, free and slave, and the efforts of their white supporters, that brought about the greatest achievement of the war—the ending of the evil system of human slavery.

If Frank and Joyce Stewart had known the history of this country—not just the part about George Washington and Abraham Lincoln they teach in school—they would have been able to answer the question a lot of people ask about deportations.

WHAT CAN YOU DO?

As was described in the previous section, at the time of the Fugitive Slave Law, the widest, boldest resistance came from the direct victims of the law: slaves and free black women and men.

Just as then, widest resistance now will come from Mexican residents of the U.S., who bear the heaviest burden. Already, they are beginning to show the way.

In Los Angeles last year, workers who are here with legal papers refused to show them to the immigration agents, jamming the prisons and courts with their resistance to an unjust, unfair, racist law. Also in Los Angeles, thousands of Mexican people without papers marched in defiance of the law to the Immigration Department offices. In such large numbers, and with the support of so many people, nobody was arrested.

IT IS TIME TO RESIST EVIL

There are many more actions that people can take to defend workers without papers. We can refuse all cooperation with the immigration agents. We can refuse to answer any questions, including where we were born. We can turn around and ask them where they were born. Or tell them to show us their papers, if we are stopped.

All this is completely legal. And if a lot of us who are citizens or permanent residents refuse to cooperate, it will make it very difficult for the immigration police to do their dirty work. Beyond that, we can go even further. We can begin to show our strength by acting together where we work. Workers in large plants and mills can prevent the immigration police from freely circulating around and snatching people out. There is no way that raids can be carried out at large mills like Republic Steel, the scene of a recent raid, if the people who work there decide to stop them. Furthermore, workers can respond with strike action against the deportation program. They can strike if the front office lets the immigration police in the door. Like the slave rescues described earlier, these actions could put a fast stop to the ugly harassment and deportations of Mexican people in the U.S.

There is no doubt that the American working class, veteran of the eight hour day movement, practitioner of the sit-down strike and the roving picket line, instigator of the flying wedge and the strike-on-the-job, can bring these evil deportations to a screeching halt—once they make up their minds to do it.

AFTERWORD

This pamphlet was written nearly 50 years ago by a group of political activists involved in a U.S. effort to defend migrant workers who they saw as part of the international working class.

At that time global capitalism was in deep crisis. Between 1977 and 1989, anti-immigrant policies were used by both the Carter and Reagan administrations to deflect the anger of U.S. workers over a sinking economy's impact on their standard of living. Anti-immigrant public policies were not, however, without their contradictions. Right-wingers wanted more enforcement of immigration law, stronger border controls and more deportations. Corporate agriculture and the owners of many factories wanted cheap migrant labor.

Many liberals wanted legislation to put an end to mass deportations and to legalize migrant workers already in the U.S. Back and forth executive orders on the part of different Presidents and one failed immigration bill after another were a manifestation of these conflicts.

In 1977, the authors of this pamphlet were attempting to encourage mass action to protest and physically resist deportations and the harsh measures being used at the border against migrants without legal documents. Their thinking was and still is that if immigrants are a part of an international working class, national borders are of no concern. There were some successes in blocking raids on factories and in providing legal help

to some immigrants. However, many immigrants suffered and still do.

Today, in 2024, we seem to have come full circle. Large segments of the international working class who are citizens of the U.S. have demonstrated that they are feeling the negative impacts of an underlying economic crisis and voted for Donald Trump for President of the United States. His campaign for office had a strong anti-immigrant focus. The elections also gave control of the U.S. Congress to his allies.

Trump's campaign vilified immigrants with racist language, stereotyping them as thugs, drug dealers, rapists, murderers, human traffickers and exhorted that immigrants "were poisoning the blood of our country." Campaign promises included completing the building of a wall across the Southern border that he started during his first term in office. He further vowed he would have tougher enforcement of immigration laws at the border. Trump has also promised that he will deport one million immigrants a year using the military to conduct massive raids of workplaces and homes. His choices for cabinet and staff who would implement such a program are all clearly anti-immigrant. In short, he intends to make good on these promises.

The context for the expected anti-immigrant persecutions has some similarities to 1977.

**CAPITALISM'S DEEP
ECONOMIC CRISIS
CONTINUES AND WORKING
CLASS PEOPLE ARE HIT THE
HARDEST BY IT.**

The contradictions between the hard right wing and corporate agriculture and some factory owners still exist. Liberals are still calling for various reforms. The large mass production factories that are the focus in this pamphlet are mostly gone. Yet, the call for resistance in today's changed economic landscape is still of vital importance.

There are also other differences from conditions in 1977. During the George W. Bush administration (2001-09), immigration moved from being a predominantly economic issue to one of national security. In the wake of the attack on the Twin Towers in New York City in 2001, the immigration issue was folded into Bush's "War on Terror," a stance that was extended during the Obama years (2009-17) and during the first Trump administration. Today the national security link is still the dominant political justification for the abuse of migrant labor in the U.S.

One further change in the context of today's U.S. immigration policies is that U.S. geopolitical actions have increasingly contributed to collapsing economies and wars around the world, especially in Central and South America.

THE RAMIFICATION OF U.S. FOREIGN POLICY AND CLIMATE CHANGE ON U.S. IMMIGRATION POLITICS HAS BEEN PROFOUND.

An example of this is Venezuela. Since 2017 U.S. sanctions on Venezuela impeded their economy from recovering. The sanctions made it impossible for Venezuela, which has vast oil resources, to reap the benefits of rising oil prices. 7.7 million Venezuelans have fled their homeland. Biden's initial open door policy to Venezuelan refugees caused a run on the U.S. border. But Republican politicians resisted. Governor Abbot of Texas, for example, began busing Venezuelan immigrants seeking asylum in the U.S. to Northern cities with Democratic Party mayors. Abbot dumped an estimated 25,500 Venezuelan migrants in Chicago in an 18 month period between 2022 and 2023. (This estimate does not include those arriving in Chicago's suburbs.) Most of these adult migrants will become eligible for work permits due to a Biden Administration executive order. Yet, in the meantime, throughout Chicago, migrants are begging on the streets for money.

The scramble to house these migrants in the context of Chicago's larger, cruel, homeless crisis has provoked an angry response from many black and Mexican people and politicians who feel that the effort to accommodate the Venezuelans comes at the expense of Chicago's poor black people and Mexicans.

COLLAPSED ECONOMIES, CLIMATE CHANGE, AND WARS HAVE RESULTED IN THE DISPLACEMENT OF MILLIONS OF PEOPLE AND MANY OF THEM HAVE HEADED TO THE SOUTHERN BORDER OF THE U.S. SEEKING ASYLUM.

**FURTHER, PRESIDENT
ELECT TRUMP COULD
CANCEL PRESIDENT
BIDEN'S EXECUTIVE
ORDER SO THE
VENEZUELAN IMMIGRANTS
WHO ARE WAITING FOR
TEMPORARY LEGAL
STATUS AND WORK
PERMITS COULD BECOME
VICTIMS OF TRUMP'S
MASS DEPORTATION
PLANS.**

In 1977 when this pamphlet was first written, the immigrants were nearly all Mexican. Today they are predominantly from Venezuela and Central America as well as Mexico. Also there are migrants from China and a variety of African nations at the U.S. Southern border.

The pile up of immigrants at the southern border is in part due to an aspect of U.S. immigration law. The law requires that legitimate claims for political asylum in the U.S. must be honored. But for some time the capacity of the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) to evaluate asylum claims has been insufficient to meet the number of claims they receive.

For years immigrants seeking asylum have been allowed to stay in the U.S. until their claims could be evaluated. This often took years. This is one reason why there are so many people without documents in the country today.

During the Biden Administration, efforts to encourage asylum for residents of Cuba, Haiti, Venezuela and Guatemala opened the floodgates to even more migration and thousands of people were piled up along the Southern border. Many of these migrants ultimately crossed the border illegally. The government response to these changed conditions has been chaotic.

From 2001 to today (2024) we have seen a mish mash of failed immigration bills and a series of executive orders that have been reversed by each successive Presidential administration.

From 2009-17, President Obama took a centrist position on immigration and focused on attempting to appease his liberal base by creating a path to U.S. citizenship for the children of undocumented workers. Later the undocumented parents of these children were included. Meanwhile he created a harsher response to illegal entry at the border.

In 2016, President Trump campaigned on an anti-immigrant platform promising to build a wall across the Southern border and to deport undocumented workers already in the country. The wall was never completed and he actually deported fewer undocumented workers than his successor, Joe Biden.

President Biden (2021-24) initially tried to reign in the aggressive action of the U.S. Immigration and Enforcement Agency (ICE) that separated parents from their children.

He actually paused deportations for a while. He stopped the construction of the border wall and issued executive orders including the program to increase admissions of immigrants from Cuba, Haiti, Nicaragua and Venezuela.

He also issued an executive order to allow undocumented spouses of American citizens a path to citizenship. (The U.S. Supreme Court ultimately blocked this program.)

His administration and a group of Senators from both Republican and Democratic parties offered a bipartisan proposal for a comprehensive immigration reform bill. The bill involved major concessions to the anti-immigrant right wing, thus winning bipartisan support. Trump urged his supporters in Congress to kill the bill because it would hurt his reelection prospects. It didn't pass.

In June of 2024 President Biden issued an executive order that the border would be completely shut down if crossings exceeded 2,500 per day. This slowed migration to the border.

In the end, President Biden's administration deported more undocumented workers than did Trump.

As we write this, President Trump and his Republican allies have swept the elections based in part on a promise to finish the wall and to deport a million "illegals" a year. His choices of people who will handle immigration initiatives are all far right hard liners on immigration. Trump will control executive, legislative and judicial branches of government.

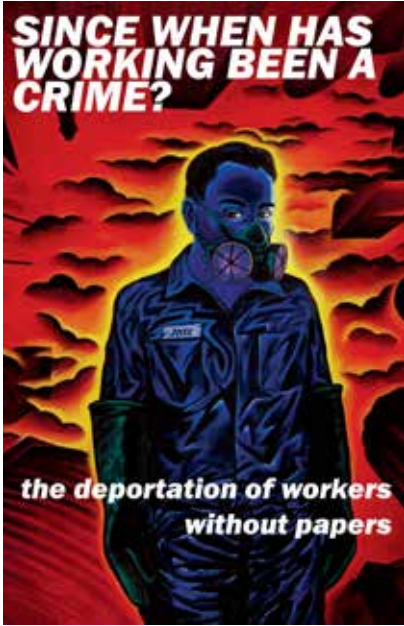
It appears he means business and the mood of the country seems to be with him. While the political/economic context of the immigration crises have changed greatly since 1977, the need to see attacks on immigrants in the U.S. as a part of an attack on the international working class is as urgent as ever. The discussion of a factory raid among black workers at the beginning of this pamphlet is as important today as it was in 1977.

Our point in that discussion along with using the example of resistance to Fugitive Slave laws of 1850 in the second half of this pamphlet was to encourage white and black workers to join a broad working class resistance to the global attack on the international working class. That remains our task today.

**CAPITALISM IS IN CRISIS
AND AN ANTI-IMMIGRANT
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**BROAD RESISTANCE
ON THE PART OF THE
INTERNATIONAL WORKING
CLASS IS ESSENTIAL. IT
WILL REQUIRE ACTION ON
THE PART OF ALL OF US.**

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SINCE WHEN HAS WORKING BEEN A CRIME?
the deportation of workers without papers

PUBLISHED 1977 BY SOUTH CHICAGO WORKERS' RIGHTS CENTER

Written in 1977, when threats of raids and deportations were high and directed mainly at Mexican immigrants.

Today the context of such threats has changed but action is just as urgent. The changing context of anti-immigration deportations and arrests is addressed in an afterword at the end of the pamphlet.

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SINCE WHEN HAS WORKING BEEN A CRIME?

A person with large, dark butterfly wings is shown from behind, leaning forward. They are wearing a purple t-shirt and blue jeans. The person is behind a chain-link fence. The background is a warm, orange and yellow gradient with glowing green circles around the person's head.

***the deportation of workers
without papers***

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