

AT 2: Migration

Fag: Samfundsfag, engelsk og 2. fremmedsprog

Problemstilling:

Hvad får mennesker til at forlade deres hjemstavn og immigrere til et fremmed land og en ny kultur?

Hvilke fordele og ulemper medfører migration for migranterne og for de lande, som de rejser til og forlader?

AT 2 i engelsk: Illegal Immigrants in the USA

Indhold

Illegale immigranter i USA

- immigranternes oprindelse
- omfang af immigranter
- årsag til immigration, dvs. push and pull faktorer
- leve- og arbejdsforhold i USA

Materiale

Kernestof:

Toil and Temptation, 2001

Fra: <http://www.villagevoice.com/news/0117,164320,24158,1.html>

Ana Maria Corona: Coming to America to Clean, 1993

Fra: <http://www.harpers.org/archive/1993/04/0001232>

Jimmy Santiago Baca: Immigrants in our own land, 1982

Fra: <http://florycanto.net/links/inxochitlincuicat/bacaimmigrantsinourownland.htm>

Jimmy Santiago Baca: So Mexicans are taking jobs from Americans, 1977

Fra: <http://www.winterspringsummer.com/poetryclass/?p=49>

Supplerende stof:

Low-Wage Workers From Mexico Dominate Latest Great Wave of Immigrants, 2006

Fra: <http://www.nytimes.com/2006/12/19/us/19raquelside.html>

Making a Life in the U.S., but Feeling Mexico's Tug, 2006

Fra: http://www.nytimes.com/2006/12/19/us/19raquel.html?_r=1&oref=slogin

"Melting Pot" America, 2006

Fra: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/americas/4931534.stm>

Q&A: US immigration debate, 2007

Fra: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/americas/4850634.stm>

US Illegal Immigrants – Facts and Figures

<http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/shared/spl/hi/guides/456900/456958/html/nn1page1.stm>

An Illegal Immigrant's Life in the US (nyhedsklip)

Fra: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SnRacBZ43Oc>

Illegal Immigrants in the USA (nyhedsklip)

Fra: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=j-1ms0Qys4c&feature=Playlist&p=4D20802626EE19D4&index=0&playnext=1>

Illegal Immigrants and Schooling (nyhedsklip)

Fra: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=B8AJ9LEfsFI&feature=related>

Dangerous Crossing of the Border (nyhedsklip)

Fra: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Jx7rGPHReZQ&feature=related>



Illegal Immigrants in the USA

Introduction

1. Please define the following terms:

migration – immigration – emigration – integration – assimilation – the melting pot

2. There are many reasons why people want to immigrate to the USA. Make a list of the PUSH factors (people being pushed towards the USA for various reasons) and PULL factors (people being attracted to the USA for various reasons).

Sources:

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Immigration>

<http://geog.csusb.edu/Kohout/geog322/papers/Schmidt.doc>

http://www.inmotionmagazine.com/er/pn_lyief.html#Anchor-Push-49575

http://www.jaha.org/edu/discovery_center/push-pull/peopling_pa01.html

3. What are the pros and cons of illegal immigration?

Sources:

<http://searchwarp.com/swa61485.htm>

<http://www.articler.com/10519/Illegal-Immigration-Pros-And-Cons.html>

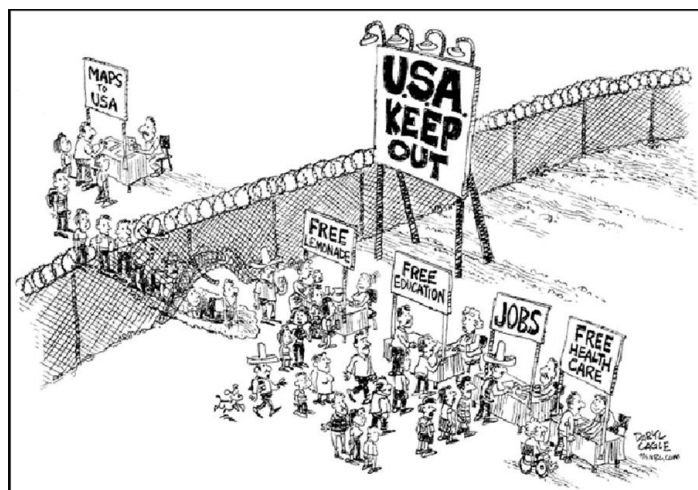
<http://prosandcons.us/?p=6290>

4. According to this Web Site, how many legal and illegal immigrants are there in the USA today? <http://www.cis.org/topics/currentnumbers.html>

5. Account for the origin, location and employment of illegal immigrants. Source:

<http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/shared/spl/hi/guides/456900/456958/html/nn1page1.stm>

6. Find out where people have come from throughout US history.



Teamwork



I det afsluttende modul før arbejdet med synopsisen skal hvert team arbejde med følgende tekster og nyhedsklip. Materialet er inddelt i tre dele.

Del I: Jimmy Santiago Baca: So Mexicans are taking jobs from Americans (digt)

An Illegal Immigrant's Life in the US (nyhedsklip)

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SnRacBZ43Oc>

Del II: Low-Wage Workers From Mexico Dominate Latest Great Wave of Immigrants (artikel)

Illegal Immigrants in the USA (nyhedsklip)

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=j-1ms0Qys4c&feature=Playlist&p=4D20802626EE19D4&index=0&playnext=1>

Illegal Immigrants and Schooling (nyhedsklip)

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=B8AJ9LEfsFI&feature=related>

Del III: Melting Pot America (artikel)

Dangerous Crossing of the Border (nyhedsklip)

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Jx7rGPHReZQ&feature=related>

Arbejdsgang

Runde I:

I 3. modul fordeles materialet således, at hvert teammedlem har ansvaret for en del. Materialet skal forberedes til 4. modul.

Runde II:

I 4. modul splitter teammedlemmerne sig op og danner nye teams, hvor alle medlemmer har forberedt det samme materiale. I det nye team skal der samarbejdes om at forberede mundtlige præsentationer af materialet. Den mundtlige præsentation skal være baseret på et manuskript i punktform og vare cirka fem minutter.

Runde III:

De oprindelige teams gendannes og medlemmerne fremlægger på skift deres materiale. Efter præsentationerne skal hvert team diskutere, i hvilket omfang materialet fra de tre fremlæggelser skal indgå i synopsisen.

Toil and Temptation

By Michael Kamper

For seven days after his arrival from Mexico in mid January, Antonio Gonzalez spent his time alone in the apartment, watching Spanish-language soaps and game shows, occasionally looking out the window at the snowy Bronx streets or gazing at the 6 train as it clattered by on the el. Two years earlier, his older brother, Juan Carlos, had learned the neighborhood by each day venturing a block farther from the apartment, then returning home. When he had mastered the surrounding streets, he traveled a stop on the subway—then two, then three. But Antonio saw the police cars passing by on the streets, and fearing deportation, he stayed inside. On the eighth day, the skies cleared, and he went to work at the car wash with his brother.

Antonio and Juan Carlos left before dawn, walking north along Westchester Avenue, past the candy store, restaurant, pizza parlor, real estate office, and bodega, each business owned by immigrants: Indians, Dominicans, Italians, Guyanese, and Puerto Ricans, respectively. Antonio smiled as he passed the pizza parlor. A 15-year-old acquaintance from Zapotitlán, Antonio's village of 4500 in southern Mexico, had vanished a year earlier, and a few nights ago Antonio had gone to buy a slice and found the young man there, sweeping bits of crusts and garlic salt from the floor.

At Westchester Square, the two brothers caught the X31 bus along Tremont and Williamsbridge avenues to Eastchester, a north Bronx neighborhood remarkable for its dreary nondescriptness: block upon block of squat one-story brick buildings, stores selling auto parts and laminated furniture, a KFC, a Dunkin Donuts, some gas stations.

At the car wash, no one tells Antonio how much he is being paid, and he does not ask. In lieu of training, he is handed a towel and told to join a dozen others—all compact, brown-skinned men like himself—who stand in the mist at the foot of the wash tunnel, eyes sandy from sleep, waiting for the cars to roll out. The men regard him coolly, saying nothing, but shout to one another in Spanish over the roar of the machinery—the blowers, spray jets, and huge flopping strands of soapy cloth that make sucking noises as they slap against the cars.

At 7 a.m., a sedan rolls out of the tunnel, and six men swarm the vehicle, quickly burnishing the exterior and wiping clean the windows from the inside. Thirty seconds later another vehicle is spit out, and Antonio joins the second group, trying to walk alongside the still-rolling car as the others do, wiping as they move.

The former slaughterhouse worker left school at 13. He has been a laborer for five years, frequently averaging 70 or more hours a week at jobs in Mexico. He has assumed that rubbing a car dry will be easy work, easy money. He is wrong. The teenager stoops, bends, and reaches for the elusive water droplets; an hour later his legs and back ache, and pain rockets through his arm as he drags the waterlogged towel over the cars for the thousandth time. The areas that he wipes are still damp, and the others take up his slack and grumble about the poor job he's doing. He is nervous and afraid to disappoint his brother, who has paid \$1600 for Antonio's illegal passage to New York. He sees the boss watching him from inside the glass booth, motionless and grim-faced.

Another worker shows Antonio how to fold his towel to get better coverage, but Antonio repeatedly drops the towel as he tries to double it. Behind him, the cars are piling up in the tunnel, and he works quickly, just short of frantic. He has 11 hours and 500 cars to go. Before the day is over, he is thinking that his journey to New York is a mistake. He is thinking that he will return home soon, to Zapotitlán, his village in the state of Puebla, where the majority of New York's Mexicans come from.

If Antonio does return, he will be a man very nearly alone, in the company of young children and the elderly. Fully one third of Antonio's village—including nearly all of the working-age males and 20 percent of the women—is in New York City. Firm figures are hard to come by for a community that is largely illegal, but in the last decade, New York City's Mexican population has grown between 300 and 600 percent—depending on which experts are consulted—to a

total of at least 300,000. Dr. Robert Smith, a Barnard College expert on Mexican immigration, calls the growth "astounding—the fastest of any group in the city." (So many Mexicans have left Puebla that they are called the Puebla York, in much the same way that New York City's Puerto Ricans are referred to as Nuyoricans, and Manhattan-based channel 47 hosts *Hechos Puebla*, a weekly show on Puebla current events.)

Like Antonio, nearly all the newly arrived Mexicans have traded one life of labor and poverty for another. They are young men and women who, in their homeland, have run up against the walls created by class, lack of education, and the detritus of 70-plus years of one-party rule. In Mexico, there is no future; in New York, there might be.

The residents of Zapotitlán began arriving in New York 18 years ago. A two-month investigation into the community reveals a clear majority who have fallen into a semipermanent underclass: men and women here illegally, who trade 70-hour workweeks for a handful of cash. A small but growing number of young men have drifted into drugs and gangs. But many others—maybe one in five—have found some degree of prosperity in New York, settling into comfortable middle-class lives and easing ties to their homeland. Still others have created a dual existence, maintaining families and even businesses in Zapotitlán. They fly home a few times a year, then travel back like thieves in the night, slipping past the Border Patrol, into the Arizona desert. Of New York City's Mexican population as a whole, 75 percent are not upwardly mobile, as many as nine in 10 are "illegal," and fully half the teens are not in school.

April 15 is opening day for the Liga Mexicana de Beisból, made up of 16 teams, each representing a town in Puebla. (The baseball-crazy city of Tulcingo is fielding four separate teams.) Zapotitlán's team is making its league debut; they have new white uniforms, ordered from Mexico, bearing a cactus logo and the words Club Zapotitlán. On Sunday morning the players gather early at City Island and win an error-filled first game, 8-4, using a pitcher who was chased through the Arizona desert by the Border Patrol scant weeks ago. His 19-year-old son, also here illegally, works in a Dominican bodega on Tremont Avenue; the pitcher has come to help make money to pay for the son's house, under construction in Zapotitlán. He has come, he says, because he wants his son home soon, "before he becomes Americanized."

In years past, Zapotitlán's players were dispersed throughout other clubs in the league, yet a hundred or more Zapotecos would show up for a game if they heard a few of their paisanos were playing. "We love baseball," explains Angel Flores, one of Club Zapotitlán's founders. "But really we put the team together because the people from Zapotitlán need a place to gather." Hundreds of people from the village are expected to show up for games this year, which will be followed by barbecues and socializing.

Angel has spent 12 and a half of the last 13 years in New York working as a laborer. For several years, he has worked as a painter for an Irish contractor in Yonkers. He has watched as the man has gone from a rented house and car to an ornate home, three rental properties, and three new cars. "There is a network," Angel explains. "My boss gets all his contracts from other Irishmen."

Yet Angel is not envious of the Irishman's success; Angel makes \$130 a day, tax free, a princely sum by the standards of illegal Mexicans in New York. And he has his own network; he has managed to stack the work crew with five others from Zapotitlán—including the pitcher, who is his cousin. Angel's father was a miner in Mexico, and he brags softly about his siblings there: a nurse, a lawyer, an engineer. He is not envious of them, either; he put each through college with money he earned in New York. He is an uneducated laborer, they are professionals, yet he has enabled their social mobility. His one complaint about New York? "The people from Zapotitlán, I don't see some of them for years," he says. From the Bronx, they are slowly dispersing into Queens and Brooklyn, like water seeping into the earth after the rains.

Luis Garcia, the first resident of Zapotitlán to arrive in New York, in 1983, settled near Willis Avenue, in the Bronx, down the block from where the 6 train stops under the 40th Precinct. Within a few years, dozens of friends and relatives were arriving with little more than his phone number, and they slept on his couch or on mattresses lined up on the floor. Gradually the community grew and relocated; some went out to Queens, a few moved south to the burgeoning Mexican community in Sunset Park, Brooklyn. Most, however, stayed near the 6 train,

following the el north along Westchester Avenue to Soundview and Castle Hill in the Bronx. They are there today, perhaps a thousand strong; at just one building, 690 Allerton Avenue, at the corner of White Plains Road, there are an estimated 50 families from Zapotitlán. (One of the few remaining Puerto Ricans in the building says, "You're looking for Mexicans? You came to the right place, and it's getting worse!") They find each other work, baby-sit one another's children. In a strange land, they take comfort in neighbors they have known since childhood.

And sometimes, in their insular community, they find love. In 1996, Alma Rosa, a tall, graceful teenager, placed second in the local beauty pageant in San Antonio, Mexico, a nearby village that makes Zapotitlán seem like a metropolis. Alfonso, the second oldest son of a middle-class family in Zapotitlán, found her there at the pageant, and the two began to date. Yet the young girl's family strongly disapproved of Alfonso, and they sent their 19-year-old daughter away, to San Bernardino, California, where there is a small colony of townspeople. Alfonso followed and searched northern California in vain for several weeks, eventually losing hope, assuming she would be married if he ever found her. He left for New York to seek work. The following spring, at a gathering of people from Zapotitlán, he heard two men speak of her. She too had come to New York, and he called her that evening. The couple live today in a building full of Mexicans on Dean Street, in downtown Brooklyn, with their two small children and three of Alfonso's brothers.

About one-fifth of the immigrants from Zapotitlán are women, and the percentage is growing steadily. In the Mexican community as a whole, the number of women arriving in New York is higher, probably approaching 40 percent. They are working in factories, cleaning houses, and having children. The birth rate among Mexican woman rose 232 percent between 1989 and 1996; they now rank third among immigrant groups in New York City—higher than Chinese, South Asians, or Haitians. "Most of these [Mexican] women are very young, and they have a high fertility rate; it's a double whammy," says Peter Lobo of the New York City Department of Planning. "This is going to have a huge impact on New York City."

At the car wash, a week has passed. The pain in Antonio's body has lessened, he has learned how to handle the towel, how to flip the car doors open, wipe the seals with one quick motion, then snap the towel over his shoulder and quickly wipe the windows with a softer blue rag. His coworkers are not so intimidating now; the other Mexicans see that he will work and begin to talk and joke with him—the Salvadorans also, though they speak differently and seem harder men, having been through a war that Antonio knows nothing about. And then there are the tall, dark-skinned men, men unlike any he has seen in Mexico, who he has assumed are morenos, African Americans, but turn out to be Africans, and at first he is confused by the distinction ("In the dark of the tunnel, you can see just their eyes," he says with some wonderment). Because they are African, they are very proud, he is told, and dislike taking orders. With the exception of a garrulous Nigerian who has learned to speak Spanish, the Africans are given jobs where they work alone.

Spend 72 hours a week wiping other people's cars, and resentment is a constant companion. Until recently, Antonio has known only Mexicans. Lunch and downtime at the car wash are filled with talk of money and race. Eastchester is a working-to middle-class neighborhood of West Indian and African American civil servants, secretaries, teachers, construction workers. Most work hard, many favor nice cars, and the line at the car wash is a parade of conspicuous consumption—Cadillacs, Lexus, late-model SUVs. They come here because it is nearby, and because the "Super," which includes hot wax, polish, and wheels Armoralled, costs \$9, a savings of \$3 over the other car wash, a half-mile down Baychester Avenue, where the white people go.

But the Black people—especially the young Black men—don't appreciate paying hard-earned money to have a bunch of illegals leave drops of water on their cars. If they feel they are not getting their money's worth, they wave their hands in the air and shout at the workers and then mock them: "No speak eengleesh." Antonio quickly learns the phrase "Yo, yo, yo" and an utterance that sounds to him like "fock" or "focking," which he believes to be a mean word. And noise is of particular concern. Antonio and Juan Carlos are soft-spoken and courteous. They would never raise their voices unless they were ready to fight. These Black men raise their voices all the time.

The tips left by the Black clientele run to silver and copper, with some dollar bills thrown in. At the end of a 12-hour shift, Antonio takes home maybe \$5 in tips. Down the hill, los blancos leave \$5 bills, and rumor has it the workers average \$30 a day in tips. Times six days, that's good money. But here Antonio is stuck with the cheap morenos who shout at him, wear their clothes baggy, and lounge against the wall. "Where do they get their money?" he wants to know. To him, and to the other Mexicans, the young Black men seem lazy and dangerous.

The first week there are days when it rains and there is no work, but soon Antonio is averaging 72 hours a week. His hourly rate remains a mystery to him. He is simply handed an envelope with \$270 in cash at week's end, which he accepts without complaint. Juan Carlos is the senior laborer at the car wash. With a year and a half of experience, he makes \$4 an hour. The others, he believes, make \$3.75 an hour. It is straight time—nothing extra after 40 hours. A laborer working at the legal minimum wage, plus overtime, would be paid \$497. The car wash has approximately 20 employees. By using workers without green cards, the owner, a Portuguese immigrant, is saving nearly a quarter of a million dollars a year.

Twenty years ago, Mexican workers had the second-highest per capita income among Hispanics. Today they have the lowest. Their average earning power has dropped 50 percent, a result of the flood of illegal laborers like Antonio who are readily exploited by tens of thousands of small businesses throughout the city—restaurants, delis, small factories, and building contractors who rely on their subminimum wage labor to turn a profit.

But to Antonio, \$300 a week is about \$270 more than most men make in Mexico, where the minimum wage is \$4 a day. After work one evening in mid February, the two brothers walk down to the Western Union near Castle Hill Avenue. There, they send a money order for \$300 to their mother in Mexico. It is their combined savings from three weeks of work. Theirs is a drop in the bucket: In 1996, the last year for which figures are available, \$5.6 billion was sent home by Mexicans in the U.S., making remesas the third largest factor in the Mexican economy.

Of Antonio's townspeople here in New York, there is a shoe-store owner in Queens who is building a gas station in the village; a busboy at a restaurant on Madison who is part-owner of construction vehicles that are rented out in Zapotitlán for \$2000 a month; a 17-year-old bodega worker on Tremont who makes \$1200 a month and sends \$1000 home to his mother—eating free food at his job and staying inside on his day off, lest he be tempted to spend money. They say that those who suffer the most in New York, live the best when they return to Mexico.

When he left Zapotitlán for New York, Antonio's stated dream was to build a kitchen for his mother. Upon receiving her son's money, she hires a local contractor to begin work on the addition, then abandons the project, to be completed another time. A few weeks later, Antonio sends more money and the mother of nine—who cannot read or write, but adds complex sums with lightning speed—buys several hundred dollars' worth of food and soda, and opens a small store in the front room of her house.

By late February, Antonio has begun to feel secure in the Bronx. There is solace in the daily routine; he is no longer afraid of the police that pass by, the dollar bills and coins are less confusing. Yet the frustration starts early each morning. At work, vacuum cleaner in hand, Antonio has learned to say, "Open the trunk." But the patrons frequently respond with a torrent of words, and he stands and listens helplessly. Buying coffee at the bodega is an ordeal; he gets nervous, procrastinates. What if the Puerto Rican woman is not working today? The other counter workers ask him questions that he does not understand. The customers stare as he grows flustered.

And Antonio begins to see the long-term limitations as well. The two brothers are living doubled-up, and being gouged on the rent, but cannot move; landlords won't rent to "illegals" with no credit history. Juan Carlos has a friend working at a midtown parking lot—a union job, \$20 an hour, and they're hiring. But between Antonio and Juan Carlos, they have only one fake green card from Texas, with someone else's name on it. It will never do. So they stay at the car wash, surrounded by opulence and possibilities, caged by their illegal status and lack of English. A friend suggests English classes and Antonio laughs. "We leave the house before six in the morning and get home after eight at night—some nights we work until 10. When do

we take the classes?" A week later he says, "We could just stay right here, buy from the Puerto Ricans, work with the Mexicans, stay right here." He means literally and figuratively, and he shakes his head. Right here is not going to be good enough.

For the first generation who arrived from Zapotitlán, in the 1980s, right here wasn't good enough either. Lupe Gonzalez came across in 1987, in the trunk of a car with holes cut in the floor. The coyotes gave him a straw through which he sucked fresh air as he bounced over the roads near San Diego. The 18-year-old's entered the work force as a messenger in midtown Manhattan—\$100 a week plus tips. Yet the job suited him no more than the conservative lifestyle of his hometown. "I used to dress up in my sister's clothes and play with dolls when I was a child," explains Lupe. In 1991, he found a job as a hairdresser at a shop on a Bronx side street, near the Morrison Avenue stop on the 6 train. He slowly built up his clientele in the Hispanic neighborhood, and became best friends with two Puerto Rican stylists, who were also gay. "They taught me how to do my makeup, how to wear fake tetas and high heels. They took me to the gay clubs and balls," he says, explaining his entry into New York's gay community.

Eight years ago, he put down \$5000, bought the shop he worked in, and renamed it Versace; in February of 2001, he opened a second, larger location, Style 2000. He now has five employees. On a recent April evening, the tall hairdresser with the lipstick and long hair formed elaborate curls with a hot comb in the crowded salon, the air filled with hair spray and merengue blasting from overhead speakers. The four chairs were full, and a crowd of people—Dominicans, Puerto Ricans, Mexicans, one Chinese woman—waited near the door for their hair to be cut.

As an openly gay man, a successful business person, a legal resident of the U.S., and a fluent English speaker, Lupe is clearly an anomaly in the Mexican community, whose biggest holiday is December 12, the birthday of the Virgin of Guadalupe. One expects to hear painful stories of his exclusion among his fellow immigrants from Zapotitlán: There are none. "They wave at me on the street," he says. "They know that I'm one of the 12 sons and daughters of Delfino Gonzalez, from Zapotitlán. That's all that matters."

One Saturday night in late March, Los Tigres del Norte, a hugely popular Mexican norteño band, comes to New York. Antonio and Juan Carlos are there, and as the band takes the stage, the audience erupts, waves of adulation washing over the musicians. They launch into a set of ballads about being from Mexico, having nothing there—no profession or future—and risking your life to cross the border illegally; about grueling workweeks and a life that is nothing more than "from home to work, from work to home." In the crowd there is a wave of emotion that Antonio has never felt before, a current very nearly electric. He is surrounded by thousands of cheering, nearly hysterical countrymen who share his life, his pain, his frustration. Grown men—macho Mexican men—are weeping all around him.

The following Saturday night, the 18-year-old's destination is the notorious Chicano Club. Three thousand miles away, in small Mexican villages, women speak of this Bronx nightspot in hushed tones. Men speak of it with smiles on their faces. They speak of the Dominican and Puerto Rican women in high heels, skin-tight pants, and halter tops. You can hold them as close as you want—at least as long as the song is playing. You're paying for it: \$2 a dance. Antonio, Juan Carlos, and two friends sit at a table, drinking rounds of Corona and watching the women in the smoke-filled room. A live band is pounding out bachatas, cumbias, and covers of hits by Los Tigres. The music and bodies and laughter begin to run together. Money that could have been saved and sent to Mexico is spent on women and beer. It is the cost of feeling alive for a night. Antonio gets home about 4 a.m., sleeps for an hour, and leaves for work, exhausted, hung over, smelling of perfume and feeling good.

Mexicans say that teenagers like Antonio lose their money and their innocence at the Chicano, but it is New York that takes these things. In Sunset Park, Brooklyn, Ignacio, a 22-year-old man from Zapotitlán, knows the Chicano well—but he cannot go there, because it is in the Bronx, and people will kill him if they find him. A strikingly handsome, muscular man, he sits in a dreary apartment, roaches blazing trails over pinups of naked women on the walls. He sends \$500 a month to his wife and three children in Zapotitlán. They live in a house overlooking the desert and the forests of giant saguaro cactus, in a place where, in the middle of the

day, one hears total silence. His family is waiting patiently for his return. He is never going back. He cannot. He is addicted to New York.

Ignacio made his first trip to New York when he was 17. He worked delivering pizzas for an Italian place on the Grand Concourse, in the Bronx. One day the teenager made the mistake of looking inside the pizza box. "When you come from Mexico, your eyes are closed," he says of his early days in the city. "Now my eyes are open." His is a complex story involving drug deliveries, vendettas, betrayals, attempted murders. The details do not matter. What matters is that he stands at night on Brooklyn street corners in a tight T-shirt and baggy pants. He has a gold chain, a .25 automatic, and some bags of coke. Much of the profit goes up his nose, and he works a day job washing dishes to support his habit and his children. His life in New York is a secret he keeps from his family. "They have this dream of who I am, why ruin that?" he asks. He's made a couple of trips back, gotten his wife pregnant twice more. But he could not stay around the friendly, trusting people of his hometown. "Their eyes are closed," he repeats dismissively.

Living in New York is costing more than Antonio expected, much more. Rent, food, and transit take up over half of the \$1200 a month that he earns. Then there are clothes to be bought, weekly phone calls to Mexico, haircuts, nights out, Laundromats, a large fake gold watch from Canal Street: It has been more than a month since he sent money home. Juan Carlos commiserates: "I've been here two and a half years," he says. "All I have to show for it is a pizza oven in Mexico." Though he doesn't say so, he has also purchased the building materials for his family's new concrete house, and now Antonio has helped pay for the kitchen and for his mother's new store, modest though it may be. But it is true, for themselves, they have nothing. Juan Carlos's dream of the two brothers opening a taqueria in Mexico seems to be years away. It is mid April, however. Spring has come to the Bronx, and Antonio does not seem as fixated on his brother's dream as he once was. A Puerto Rican girl smiles at Antonio on a subway platform, he boldly asks for her number, and they talk on the phone. And there are more nights ahead at the Chicano Club, and at the nightspots that he has discovered along Roosevelt Avenue in Queens, where he danced for several hours one night with a pretty Peruvian woman.

At the car wash, his boss has seen that Antonio is good with his hands, and is training him to compound paint, which entails running a large buffing wheel gently over the car's surface. Antonio has heard there is good money in this, that paint shops pay \$500 or more a week for a good compound man. And he has heard that the boss may open another car wash, and that Juan Carlos will be manager if he can learn English. "Really, life in New York is pretty good," Antonio says one night, sitting on a park bench, Juan Carlos at his side. "All you need is a little money." Then he and his brother begin to discuss their latest plan, which is to save enough to bring their 16-year-old brother, Fernando, to the Bronx. He has already told them he wants to come.

(2001)

Coming to America to Clean

By Ana Maria Corona

I grew up in a pueblito in Sinaloa, in the countryside not far from Rosamorada. I was happy enough, but my friends always talked about getting married or leaving town and going someplace more exciting. My friends told me I was too pretty to stay there, that I should go where I would be appreciated by real men, have a fine life. Even my uncle told me I should go out into the world, not stay there. "Like a flower in the dust," he said. But how was I to make my way?

There was one way. Go to the border and find work as a maid in a foreign household. Every year some of the girls would catch the bus to Tijuana or Ciudad Juarez and try to get jobs on the other side of the frontier. Some came back to visit with nice clothes and money. Some never came back.

My cousin Bianca was the one who first made the decision to go to Tijuana. She was pretty wild, but even she wouldn't travel alone, so she asked me to go with her. Her argument was that if we didn't leave when we were young, we would be trapped. Our families wanted us to stay, because they didn't want to lose us as workers and producers of more workers. She said, "If we are going to clean house, we might as well get paid for it." I thought about it and realized she was right. I begged my uncle to loan me money to go to Tijuana. I had a little money of my own, and we could stay with Bianca's aunt in Tijuana. He gave me the money but made me promise not to tell my mother he had given it to me. I left without saying good-bye to her; I just left a letter. Bianca and I caught a ride to Rosamorada and bought tickets to Tijuana. We were two very excited girls, giggling but scared half to death. I'll never forget stepping off the bus into that huge station full of men looking us over and coyotes offering us rides to Los Angeles. I was very excited and glad that I had come.

Blanca found us both jobs in homes in San Diego in less than a month - with the help of our aunt and a thousand of her friends, of course. That's how it works: it's all word of mouth. Young girls move on or get married or make enough money to go back home, so they give word to their friends and the news passes around. There's a huge network of relatives, friends, inquiries, lost phone messages, old women carrying tales.

Once Bianca and I had jobs, we had to find a way to get across the border to claim them. Our future patrones were not willing to smuggle us across in their cars, which would have been the safest way for us. We would have to report to work through our own efforts.

We had heard the usual terrible stories of difficult crossings through dangerous terrain, of people being betrayed and sold, of people being robbed and raped and killed. But we were lucky. We met an excellent coyote named Javi, who said he could take us across as easily as

we could cross a street downtown. He wanted \$300 apiece, which my uncle said was a high price but fair enough if Javi was as good as he said. Bianca's aunt loaned her the fee and mine would be paid by my patrones when Javi delivered me. In return, I would work the first month for them without pay. This had all been arranged through the network of calls and whispers and customs.

On the night we were to go, I was terrified. If Bianca hadn't been going with me, I wouldn't have left the house. We met Javi at La Dichosa, a large open-air taco stand in lower Libertad. I was nervous and scared, and couldn't eat a thing. There were eight of us - five men in their twenties and another girl, the fiancée of one of the men. We waited in La Dichosa, everyone nervous, until after midnight. Finally a big red-and-black taxi came, and we all got in.

At first we seemed to be just driving around. Nobody was talking except Javi and the taxi driver. We were driving without headlights and we stopped several times while Javi and the driver stared across into the dark and said things that made no sense to me. Then we entered a short alley that led to a fence. I looked at it, wondering if I could climb it. Javi got out walked over to the fence, and just opened it up like a door.

The fence had been neatly cut and hooked on nails so that the cuts could not be seen from the other side. Javi motioned us out of the taxi and through the opening in the fence. He told us, very casually, to walk behind him and keep quiet. But if he said "Drop," we were to fall flat on the ground and if he said "Back," we should run back to the fence, where the taxi driver would be waiting to open it for us. But there was no need. We walked across the weeds like we were strolling through a park. When we reached the highway a van pulled over, Javi opened the door, and we jumped in and drove off. Javi smiled at me and said, "See? You could have worn your high heels."

I realized that we were in the United States, and that I was an outlaw. When we got to the parking lot where I was to meet my new patrones, Javi walked me over to a huge blue Cadillac. The people in the car looked like good people to me, a middle-aged couple that you could tell had been married a long time by the way they sat.

Javi took money from the man, counted it, then told me, "Get in, go with them. They just bought you for a month, a year, who knows how long." I got in the backseat of the Cadillac, and the lady turned around and smiled at me. She said, "Bienvenidos." She kept on talking to me, but I couldn't understand her. I felt like I'd jumped off a bridge and was washing down the river. It was two weeks before Christmas. I had just turned sixteen.

(1993)

So Mexicans Are Taking Jobs From Americans

By Jimmy Sanitago Baca

1 O Yes? Do they come on horses
with rifles, and say,
Ese gringo, gimmee your job?

And do you, gringo, take off your ring,
5 drop your wallet into a blanket
spread over the ground, and walk away?

I hear Mexicans are taking your jobs away.
Do they sneak into town at night,
and as you're walking home with a whore,
10 do they mug you, a knife at your throat,
saying, I want your job?

Even on TV, an asthmatic leader
crawls turtle heavy, leaning on an assistant,
and from a nest of wrinkles on his face,
15 a tongue paddles through flashing waves
of lightbulbs, of cameramen, rasping
"They're taking our jobs away."

Well, I've gone about trying to find them,
Asking just where the hell are these fighters.

20 The ruffles I hear sound in the night
are white farmers shooting blacks and browns
whose ribs I see jutting out
and starving children,
I see the poor marching for a little work,
25 I see small white farmers selling out
to clean-suited farmers living in New York,
who've never been on a farm,
don't know the look of a hoof or the smell
of a woman's body bending all day in fields.

1 I see this, and I hear only a few people
got all the money in this world, the rest
count their pennies to buy bread and butter.

Below the cool green sea of money,
5 millions and millions of people fight to live,
search for pearls in the darkest depths
of their dreams, hold their breath for years
trying to cross poverty to just having something.

The children are dead already. We are killing them,
10 that is what America should be saying;
on TV, in the streets, in offices, should be saying,
“We aren’t giving the children a chance to live.”
Mexicans are taking our jobs, they say instead.
What they really say is, let them die,
and the children too.

(1977)

Immigrants in our own Land

By Jimmy Santiago Baca

1 We are born with dreams in our hearts,
looking for better days ahead.
At the gates we are given new papers,
our old clothes are taken
5 and we are given overalls like mechanics wear.
We are given shots and doctors ask questions.
Then we gather in another room
where counsellors orient us to the new land
we will now live in. We take tests.
10 Some of us were craftsmen in the old world,
with our hands and proud of our work.
Others were good with their heads.
They used common sense like scholars
use glasses and books to reach the world.
15 But most of us didn't finish high school.

The old men who have lived here stare at us,
from deep disturbed eyes, sulking, retreated.
We pass them as they stand around idle,
leaning on shovels and rakes or against walls.
20

Our expectations are high: in the old world,
they talked about rehabilitation,
about being able to finish school,
and learning an extra good trade.
But right away we are sent to work as dishwashers,
25 to work in fields for three cents an hour.
The administration says this is temporary
so we go about our business, blacks with blacks,
poor whites with poor whites,
Chicanos and Indians by themselves.
30 The administration says this is right,
no mixing of cultures, let the stay apart,
like in the old neighbourhoods we came from.

We came here to get away from false promises,
from dictators in our neighbourhoods,
35 who wore blue suits and broke our doors down
when they wanted, arrested us when they felt like,
swinging clubs and shooting guns as they pleased.
But it's no different here. It's all concentrated.
The doctors don't care, our bodies decay,
40 our minds deteriorate, we learn nothing of value.
Our lives don't get better, we go down quick.

My cell is crisscrossed with laundry lines,
my t-shirt, boxer shorts, socks and pants are drying.
Just like it used to be in my neighbourhood:
45 from all the tenements laundry hung window to window.
Across the way Joey is sticking his hands

through the bars to hand Felipe a cigarette,
men are hollering back and forth to the cell,
saying their sinks don't work,
50 or somebody downstairs hollers angrily
about a toilet overflowing,
or that the heaters don't work.

I ask Coyote next door to shoot me over
a little more soap to finish my laundry.
55 I look down and see new immigrants coming in,
mattresses rolled up and on their shoulders,
new haircuts and brogan boots,
looking around, each with a dream in his heart,
thinking he'll get a chance to change his life,
60 in the end, some will just sit around
talking about how good the old world was.
Some of the younger ones will become gangsters.
Some will die and some will go on living
without a soul, a future or a reason to live.
65 Some will make it out of here with hate in their eyes,
but so very few make it out of here as human
as they came in, they leave wondering what good they are now
as they look at their hands so long away from their tools,
as they look at themselves, so long gone from their families,
70 so long gone from life itself, so many things have changed.

(1982)