

How immigrants are discriminated in the business world



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In surveying 4, 387 workers in various low-wage industries, including apparel manufacturing, child care and Studies have found that nearly three in every ten Hispanic workers feel they have been discriminated against their employment. Some report being referred to with racial slurs at work, while one in four feel they are paid less and have reduced career advancement prospects than their Caucasian counterparts. In many organizations, there is a scarcity of Hispanics, Latinos and Mexican-Americans in management positions. FBI statistics show a dramatic increase in anti-Hispanic hate crimes. And sadly, hate groups are increasing due to anti-illegal immigration concerns.

A symbol to many Hispanics, Latinos and Mexican-Americans is the construction of the U. S.- Mexico border fence which is actually several separation barriers designed to prevent illegal movement of goods and people across the U. S. and Mexico border. While much of the purported reasoning for the multi-billion dollar fence was based on preventing the entry of terrorists into the country, many feel that reasoning is flawed while our border with Canada remains open. While the efforts have also been aimed at stopping the flow of drugs into the U. S.

, a secondary effort is to prevent the flow of weapons bought in the U. S. and smuggled into Mexico. The fence will not stop illegal immigration along the border with Mexico, although it may help prevent those who are crossing illegally from blending immediately into some town populations.

However, the fence is not continuous and where there are gaps, surveillance technology must be utilized. And then, there remains the fear that tunnels

will be used even more extensively than in the past. A section of the barrier was even mistakenly built inside Mexican territory requiring its removal and rebuilding at a cost of over three million dollars. Over forty tunnels have been found since 2001 and some have been extremely sophisticated. One such tunnel from Tijuana to San Diego was half a mile long, sixty to eighty feet deep, and eight feet tall.

It had drainage, electricity and a concrete floor, and its entrance from the California side was in a modern warehouse. The entrance to the tunnel in Mexico was in another building. The border with Mexico is 1,951 miles in length.

The fence that is reportedly nearing completion was only completed for approximately 600 miles in February 2009, when news reports came out that the fence was nearly finished. As a result of the construction of the barrier, there has now been an increase in the number of people trying to cross in such areas as the Sonoran Desert and over the Baboquivari Mountain in Arizona where no fence exists. This requires crossing 50 miles of inhospitable terrain to reach the Tohono O'odham Indian Reservation, which many fear may lead to an increase in migrant deaths along the U. S.-Mexico border if the smugglers try these more difficult routes. In the last thirteen years, there have been around five thousand migrant deaths along the border. There is no excuse for discrimination in America. (Gibson, 2009) In a study on discount retailing, the researchers found that the typical worker had lost \$51 the previous week through wage violations, out of average weekly earnings of \$339.

That translates into a 15 percent loss in pay. The researchers said one of the most surprising Findings was how successful low-wage employers were in pressuring workers not to file for workers' compensation. Only 8 percent of those who suffered serious injuries on the job filed for compensation to pay for medical care and missed days at work stemming from those injuries. According to the study, 39 percent of those surveyed were illegal immigrants, 31 percent legal immigrants and 30 percent native-born Americans. The study found that 26 percent of the workers had been paid less than the minimum wage the week before being surveyed and that one in seven had worked off the clock the previous week. In addition, 76 percent of those who had worked overtime the week before were not paid their proper overtime. The study's authors noted that many low-wage employers comply with wage and labor laws.

The National Federation of Independent Business, which represents small-business owners, said it encouraged members to stay in compliance with state and federal labor laws. But many small businesses say they are forced to violate wage laws to remain competitive. The study found that women were far more likely to suffer minimum wage violations than men, with the highest prevalence among women who were illegal immigrants. Among American-born workers, African-Americans had a violation rate nearly triple that for whites.

When unscrupulous employers break the law, they're robbing families of money to put food on the table, they're robbing communities of spending power and they're robbing governments of vital tax revenues. The report found that 57 percent of workers sampled had not

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received mandatory pay documents the previous week, which are intended to help make sure pay is legal and accurate. Of workers who receive tips, 12 percent said their employers had stolen some of the tips. One in five workers reported having lodged a complaint about wages to their employer or trying to form a union in the previous year, and 43 percent of them said they had experienced some form of illegal retaliation, like firing or suspension. In instances when workers' compensation should have been used, one third of workers injured on the job paid the bills for treatment out of their own pocket and 22 percent used their health insurance. Workers' compensation insurance paid medical expenses for only 6 percent of the injured workers surveyed.

(Greenhouse, 2009) Big business benefits from cheap, immigrant labor which it exploits with low wages and poor working conditions. Lax immigration policies in general, and unenforced employer sanctions in particular, allow businesses like the garment and food service industries to recruit and hire undocumented workers. The low wages these businesses pay to immigrant labor contribute to driving down the wages for Americans. (Political Research Associates, 2002) It turns out that the continuing arrival of immigrants to American shores is encouraging business here, thereby producing more jobs, according to a new study.

Its authors argue that the easier it is to find cheap immigrant labor at home, the less likely that production will relocate offshore. When companies move production offshore, they pull away not only low-wage jobs but also many related jobs, which can include high-skilled managers, tech repairmen and

others. But hiring immigrants even for low-wage jobs helps keep many kinds of jobs in the U.

S. In fact, when immigration is rising as a share of employment in an economic sector, offshoring tends to be falling, and vice versa. In other words, immigrants may be competing more with offshore workers than with other laborers in America. We see the job-creating benefits of trade and immigration everyday, even if we don't always recognize them. Low-skilled immigrants usually fill gaps in American labor markets and generally enhance domestic business prospects rather than destroy jobs; this occurs because of an important phenomenon, the presence of what are known as complementary workers, namely those who add value to the work of others. An immigrant will often take a job as a construction worker, a drywall installer or a taxi driver, for example, while a native-born worker may end up being promoted to supervisor. And as immigrants succeed here, they help the U. S.

develop strong business and social networks with the rest of the world, making it easier for us to do business with India, Brazil and most other countries, again creating more jobs. We are all worried about unemployment, but the problem is usually rooted in macroeconomic conditions, not in immigration or offshoring. The number of illegal immigrants from the Caribbean and Latin America fell 22 percent from 2007 to 2009; their departure has not had much effect on the weak U. S.

job market. Each immigrant consumes products sold here, therefore also helping to create jobs. When it comes to immigration, positive-sum thinking

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is too often absent in public discourse these days. Debates on immigration and labor markets reflect some common human cognitive failings-namely, that we are quicker to vilify groups of different ??? others??? than we are to blame impersonal forces. Consider the fears that foreign competition, off shoring and immigration have destroyed large numbers of American jobs. In reality, more workers have probably been displaced by machines-as happens every time computer software eliminates a task formerly performed by a clerical worker. Yet we know that machines and computers do the economy far more good than harm and that they create more jobs than they destroy.

Nonetheless, we find it hard to transfer this attitude to our dealings with immigrants, no matter how logically similar ??? cost saving machines??? and ??? cost saving foreign labor??? may be in their economic effects.

Similarly, tariffs or other protectionist measures aimed at foreign nations have a certain populist appeal, even though their economic effects may be roughly the same as those caused by a natural disaster that closes shipping lanes or chokes off a domestic harbor. As a nation, we spend far too much time and energy worrying about foreigners. We also end up with more combative international relations with our economic partners, like Mexico and China, than reason can justify. In turn, they are more economically suspicious of us than they ought to be, which cements a negative dynamic into place. The current skepticism has deadlocked prospects for immigration reform, even though no one is particularly happy with the status quo.

Against that trend, we should be looking to immigration as a creative force in our economic favor.

Allowing in more immigrants, skilled and unskilled, wouldn't just create jobs. It could increase tax revenue, help finance Social Security, bring new home buyers and improve the business environment. The world economy will most likely grow more open, and we should be prepared to compete. That means recognizing the benefits-including the employment benefits-those immigrants bring to this country. (Cowen, 2010)