

Mosaic

A Loyola Student Publication

Exploring Social Justice in Chicago // Immigration 2011

School of Communication Journalism Program



**LOYOLA
UNIVERSITY
CHICAGO**

Preparing people to lead extraordinary lives



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MOSAIC₂₀₁₁

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EDITOR's LETTER



Dear Readers,

The United States has always been a country of immigrants. It has been a refuge for immigrants escaping prejudices and social injustices in their homelands for centuries. However, in recent years immigrants, both legal and illegal, have not been welcomed into our country as graciously.

During these tough economic times, immigrants have become the scapegoats for unemployment among American citizens. Yet at the same time, there are many people pushing for immigration reform to help immigrants become citizens.

We believe that this publication is extremely timely, given various movements and legislation posed to both aid and hinder immigrants. Students working on *Mosaic* magazine wanted to contribute to the discussion swirling around immigration since it affects many in our generation.

The stories within this issue are only snapshots of the families, students, men and women affected by the issues surrounding immigration.

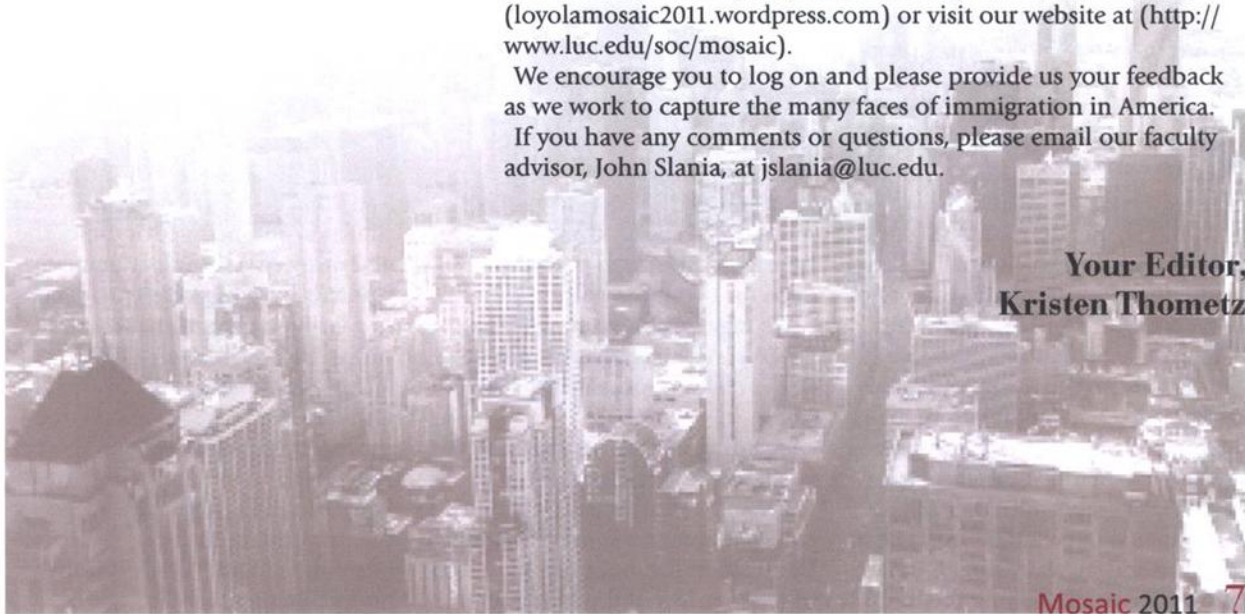
You will read about people risking their lives to come to America to make better lives for the families, and the experiences of immigrants in America. You'll also read about those who help and support immigrants, and those who oppose immigration.

Mosaic magazine is a student-run publication. Loyola students are responsible for the writing, editing, photography and layout. In addition to this magazine, *Mosaic* has grown online. Readers can follow us on Twitter (@loyolamosaicmag), Facebook, our blog (loyolamosaic2011.wordpress.com) or visit our website at (<http://www.luc.edu/soc/mosaic>).

We encourage you to log on and please provide us your feedback as we work to capture the many faces of immigration in America.

If you have any comments or questions, please email our faculty advisor, John Slania, at jslania@luc.edu.

**Your Editor,
Kristen Thometz**



SHATTERED DREAMS

Politics puts Dream Act on hold, but students still hope to make it reality

By Adam DeRose



Undocumented college student Jorge Herrera, 18, rallies with students and Dream Act supporters. AP Image

Last March, Tania Unzueta and fellow students organized a "Coming out of the Shadows" event outside the Federal Building in downtown Chicago.

The students were preparing to announce their first names and their status as undocumented immigrants and students in hopes it would spark attention and garner support for the Development, Relief and Education for Alien Minors Act.

"We were all a little scared," said Unzueta, a 26-year-old graduate student at the University of Illinois at Chicago. "The night before the coming out day, I decided to give my last name to a journalist. I felt so vulnerable. But after that, I participated in civil disobedience in Arizona and in Washington, D.C., and I have been pushing the limits

more and more."

The DREAM Act, which would grant citizenship to undocumented youth in the military or in college, is the only winnable fight left, according to Stephen Smith, Director of Organizing at the Illinois Coalition for Immigrant and Refugee Rights. After the 2010 midterm elections, comprehensive immigration reform is essentially dead for two more years.

"We may be able to squeak (the DREAM Act) through. It's not out of the realm of possibility," Smith said.

According to a survey by the Pew Hispanic Center, 8 percent of Latinos 16-25 surveyed believe a college education is necessary to get by ahead in life, but only 48 percent of those surveyed thought they had

the means to get one.

The Pew Hispanic Center also reported that Latino communities have the largest high school dropout rate, 19 percent, compared to the 9 percent amongst black communities and 6 percent in white communities.

Unzueta is familiar with the statistics, and because of them, she and other young undocumented students have played a crucial part in gaining public momentum to support the DREAM Act.

Smith said undocumented immigrants led in organizing the movement for immigration reform at a greater level than in previous fights, but they still weren't leading the movement. Smith said the movement lacked support from undocumented people.

"If you spent two years focusing on families in crisis of deportation, you're setting up for the next time (comprehensive immigration reform) comes up. We'll have more support in the areas where they were lacking," Smith said.

The Illinois Coalition for Immigrant and Refugee Rights is going to focus on highlighting that crisis in order to collect that support for their next big fight, Smith said.

"This year, one innovation is the civil disobedience among undocumented youth," Smith said. "The other is there has been a little more focus on young undocumented people building their own infrastructure, and, to a larger extent than before, on their own."

Young undocumented people have worked on activities including a "shout it out" action, planned by a Chicago-based immigrant youth organization, where undocumented young people publicly announced their undocumented status and support for the DREAM Act. Students who "shouted it out" risked arrest and even deportation. Others have staged sit-ins at federal buildings or obstructed highways.

"All forms of protest are important, but I think there's a difference between the result of getting arrested and risking deportation," Unzueta said. "I think that's the most exciting but scary feeling."

Northeastern Illinois University professor Erica Meiners is a legal resident alien from Canada. She works with students at NEIU who are undocumented because of her experiences and struggles to stay in the U.S. She is also gathering their stories to promote collegiate support of undocumented students in Illinois.

"Those young people are doing incredible work. They're organizing, and also they're incredibly tacitly

effective," Meiners said. "You see these young, chubby-cheeked people with caps and gowns being denied opportunities. That has captured the attention of mainstream Americans. I think that's a real strategic move."



**The night before
the coming out day,
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Other national groups, like United We Dream and The Dream is Coming have also staged similar actions.

Locally, Meiners said "savvy high school counselors and teachers" helped to empower and facilitate undocumented high school students to organize and attend marches and rallies. Students were able to gather and connect with one another. Their connections built as they grew older and attended colleges and universities in the city.

Educators at Senn High School and Kelyvn Park High School developed programs to empower students, Meiners said.

Young people have recognized the limits of conventional displays of discontent, and Unzueta said they developed more creative techniques than letter writing and marching.

Meiners said she is fearful of the organizing of young people for the DREAM Act will not manifest itself onto more comprehensive immigration reform and a pathway

to legalization.

"Sometimes the short-term reforms that we pick aren't good long term strategies," Meiners said, adding that the DREAM Act is a short-term solution.

But the acts of civil disobedience and coming out might just provide a strategy to gain more momentum for immigration reform, and its one thing Smith hopes more activists will utilize as a strategy.

"One thing you need a lot of is courageous acts," Smith said.

"My hope is that what happens this year opens the door for other key people to take serious risks. Right now there are almost no adult undocumented people who are public."

With the lead of the undocumented youth coming out, Smith hopes more people will be taking part in these "courageous acts."

"If this new vanguard leads to adults 'coming out' then that's a very positive and serious thing and in part a consequence of the risks young people are taking," Smith said.

Smith also said he hopes business owners will step up and declare their support for their undocumented workforce.

Civil disobedience has historically been a route to make social injustices visible to a mainstream public. Meiners said it must be accompanied by support of allies in the voting public.

"I think the impetus is on those of us who have the power and privileges to also speak out, making things more transparent and visible," Meiners said.

Unzueta echoed her concerns.

"People have to remember what their citizenship privileges them to," Unzueta said. "Every time they are asked for their Social Security number, it highlights a roadblock for us."

No Cure for No Coverage

*Undocumented immigrants
unable to secure insurance
to pay for health care*
By **BRITTANY ARNOLD**

Andrea Ramirez and Felipe Gonzalez always took care of their son. They brought him to school on time, picked him up from soccer practice each night and made sure he lived in a safe and healthy environment.

The only time they had no control was when he developed pneumonia at age 4, and eventually died.

"We never even thought that something like insurance would affect our lives in such a way that would force us to neglect our son's care," said Ramirez; 38, "just because we are undocumented."

Being uninsured is something that many immigrants struggle with. The Heartland Institute estimates that nearly 32 percent of people living in immigrant households lack health insurance, and those who arrived since 1998 account for 59 percent of the growth in the number of uninsured patients, a total of 2.7 million.

Health care research professionals attribute the increase in the uninsured to lower levels of education and higher poverty rates among immigrants. Due to the limited value of physical labor in the economy, labor which is fairly demanding, many immigrants are forced to hold jobs that do not offer health insurance.

According to researchers, the main concern is not only insurance but also emergency room services available to patients. The utilization of clinics by immigrants is nearly double that of U.S. citizens.

While the percentage of immigrants only amounts to



Undocumented immigrants often don't have health insurance. AP Photo

27 percent of the total patients without insurance, it is still a concern to many experts. The Kaiser Commission on Medicaid and the Uninsured showed an increase to 51 percent of non-citizens lacking health insurance, compared to only 15 percent of citizens who were uninsured in 2002.

Chicago Tribune Health Care reporter Bruce Japsen understands the trend well.

Having written numerous articles on immigration and its effects on health care, Japsen said simple awareness can help implement reform: Despite the high uninsured rates, findings indicate that new immigrants have influenced the overall growth in recent years.

"They are a problem because they are often not citizens and therefore are uninsured so they add costs to the health care system," Japsen said. Even with the health care reform

implemented this past year by President Obama, the struggle for undocumented families to receive health insurance remains the same.

"Immigrants will continue to add costs to the health care system because they are not going to get benefits under the health care reform law," Japsen said.

But the real problem seems to be that health care proposals now under consideration in Congress will end up increasing the nation's health care costs by leaving many legal immigrants uninsured and reliant on costly emergency room visits and public health clinics, according to the Migration Policy Institute.

Of the estimated 12 million lawful permanent residents, those who own a home and pay taxes in the United States, 4.2 million are uninsured and more than 1 million would be excluded from Medicaid

coverage or insurance subsidies if Congress doesn't remove the current five-year waiting period for eligibility, claims the Migration Policy Institute.

"Leaving large numbers of legal immigrants out of health care reform would defeat the core goal of the legislation, which is to extend coverage to the nation's 46 million uninsured," said Michael Fix, senior vice president of the Migration Policy Institute.

Even so, data alone cannot discern whether undocumented immigrants are receiving the care they need when a family member is ill.

Whether an immigrant or citizen, one's health should not be marked with a price tag, according to the American Immigration Council.

Many immigrants face hardships because they lack insurance. Risking the health of family members isn't something they expected to do when coming to the U.S.

"We came here with the intentions of giving our son the freedom and care he couldn't have in Columbia, being cared for when sick shouldn't be one more thing we must worry about," said Felipe Gonzalez, 42, who has been uninsured for nearly seven years now.

The issue is not necessarily how many uninsured immigrants contribute to the overall census within health care, but mainly how patients are treated in both private and public sectors. Documentation should not determine patient care according to MPI.

"Dealing with the uninsured is difficult. As a professional, you cannot legally neglect patients because of their inability to provide insurance and ethically you want to provide the best care possible to every patient," said Dr. Stephen Bernstein, a practitioner in Lincoln Park who has worked in both hospital facilities and private sectors.

Being insured is part of the

health care business. But not all practitioners have the same ethical beliefs as Bernstein. "Whether you are a citizen or not, if you want to be cared for, you need to take responsibility of having your loved ones insured in case of emergency," said Dr. Allen Horne, an emergency room physician in Chicago.

With nearly 15 million to 20 million uninsured in the current health care system, the option of being insured doesn't affect only immigrants but citizens too.

"I have five children, all of which had been covered by our family insurance up until the past year simply because the policies implement at my husband's job were too expensive to keep up on," said Ann King, 48, a U.S. citizen and mother from Naperville. "I want to insure my family but we can't make ends meet as it is, insurance is a priority but just not right now."

According to researchers within the Federation for American Immigration Reform, a stemming issue is the use of hospital and emergency services rather than preventative medical care. The utilization rate of hospitals and clinics by illegal aliens is more than twice the rate of the overall U.S. population, a difference of 29 percent to 11 percent overall.

Situations faced by parents like Andrea Ramirez and Felipe Gonzalez happen all too often to undocumented patients here in the United States. Estimating roughly 20 million uninsured patients still existing even with the health care reform, experts from Federation for American Immigration Reform continue to work toward improving overall patient care.

"We are not asking for anything more than to be treated like human beings," said Ramirez. "Better patient care would have saved our son's life."

IN THE NEWS:

Transplant Program Remedy for Ailing Hispanic Immigrants



AP Photo

By Therese Hogg

Imagine being diagnosed with a disease and not being able to schedule an appointment, let alone understand your doctor's explanation, because English really is a foreign language to you.

Recognizing the need for a Spanish-speaking clinic, Dr. Juan Carlos Caicedo, a transplant surgeon at Northwestern Memorial Hospital in Chicago, started the Hispanic Transplant Program in 2006.

Originally, the clinic focused solely on kidney procedures, but has expanded, and now also performs liver transplants.

The one-of-a-kind program serves patients in a "culturally-sensitive manner," with all staff members, nurses and doctors able to speak Spanish.

The clinic also provides educational meetings in Spanish for the families to learn about the diseases and treatments.

Since the program opened, kidney transplants for Hispanic patients have nearly doubled, and the center's current number of living donor kidney transplants among Hispanic patients is 63 percent. According to United Network for Organ Sharing data, this is 25 percent higher than the current national average.

STATE of the UNION

IMMIGRANT LEADS MOVEMENT TO SAVE FACTORY *By Mariann DeVlin*

Armando Robles knows the meaning of hard work. At age 6, Robles and his younger brother worked in their stepfather's factory in Mexico, cleaning and sandpapering rusty door hinges when they weren't in school. Sunday was their only day off.

"To be a kid and working, it's like stealing your innocence," Robles said. "I wanted to go outside and play with my friends from school or my neighbors... and if I didn't do it, he'd hit me with a belt or wires, or anything."

Robles, president of Chicago's United Electrical Workers Local 1110, has a long history of factory labor that began in his early childhood. So when the challenge arose to fight

for his rights as a laid-off employee at the now-defunct Republic Windows and Doors, Robles, now 40, stood up and convinced many of his fellow workers to join in a 2008 sit-in that would gain the support of the entire nation.

"When you work all your life and you feel oppressed all the time, one day you say enough is enough," Robles said. "Especially with my stepfather. I couldn't do anything because it was my father, because

he fed me and I grew with him."

Robles paused for a moment. "It wasn't really bad. It was bad, but with him, I learned to work and I learned to... survive the life."

In 1989, at the age of 19, Robles crossed the U.S.-Mexican border to work in Arizona's onion, lettuce, and cabbage fields. A year later he moved to Chicago where, for the next two decades, he would continue his life's work as a factory laborer.



Robles gives a speech during Joe Biden's visit to Serious Materials in 2009. Photo by Valerie Jenkins

Born in Tijuana, Mexico, Robles wanted to work in the U.S. only temporarily. "My plan was to come to the United States for two years, save money, and own a factory," Robles said.

He was inspired to move after hearing his friends, during their vacations to Mexico, boast about how much money they were making.

"They had good clothes, good shoes, and bicycles. Someone had

a nice car," Robles said. "But they never told us the realities of life in the United States."

Awareness of that reality quickly sunk in. Robles and his cousin each borrowed \$1,200 from his aunt to pay migrant smugglers, also known as "coyotes" or "polleros," to help them cross the border illegally into Nogales, Arizona. After being turned away by an immigration official at a checkpoint, Robles and his cousin tried several times to

jump over a gate along the border. They finally succeeded when a Mexican man used his pickup truck to hide them as they climbed over the gate.

"The immigration official who told us to go back, he saw us," Robles

said, but he didn't recognize them because they were wearing different jackets.

Robles' aunt instructed him to pay a cab driver \$5 to drive them to a nearby K-Mart, where they'd meet up with his aunt's husband. But because of the language barrier, Robles and his cousin misunderstood the directions that were given to them. The driver took them all the way to Tuscon, Arizona. During the trip, border

patrol trucks drove behind them. The cab driver warned Robles and his cousin, "If they stop us, I don't know you. You don't know me."

Stranded in Tuscon for hours, Robles' cousin grew fretful.

"He said, 'I'm going to let them catch me and send me back to Mexico.'" Robles recounted. "I said, 'No, they have the work down so let's wait.'"

Even after the two men arrived at their family's home, they were on edge.

"An hour later, the police were in a helicopter, around the area, but they were looking for somebody else," Robles said. "We didn't know about it, we were really, really scared."

Robles and his cousin immediately began work as vegetable pickers, but Robles found it difficult to pay his portion of his rent, work off the debt he owed his aunt, keep up with car repairs, and save enough money to start a business.

"I made really, really nice plans," Robles said of his dreams to open his business. "In the end, I couldn't conclude it."

A local Lutheran church offered free English classes, so Robles worked hard to learn the language. At first it was difficult, because his fellow migrant workers continued to speak Spanish. "I learned more in the street," Robles said. "Each day I kept learning."

After one year in Arizona, Robles moved to Chicago because of the city's multiculturalism and the opportunities for factory jobs. His first job was at Adjustable Clamp Company. By the time he left Adjustable Clamp 11 years later, Robles had worked long enough to gain status as a resident alien. Yet it wasn't until 2000 when Robles applied for citizenship, to help his mother Esperanza, gain legal entry into the United States.

Also in 2000, Robles got a job as a maintenance technician at

Republic Windows and Doors. In December 2008 the company's workers made national headlines when Robles and Mark Meister, a UE representative, staged a sit-in after the company folded and failed to give the proper 60-day notice of closure and denied severance pay and temporary health insurance to its workers.

"I dropped my picket sign. I grabbed the megaphone, and started yelling and throwing out all my frustration."

When it came time to rally his coworkers at a protest in front of Bank of America, which was found to be partly responsible for the denial of benefits, Robles was overcome with emotion.

"It was unbelievable to me, to be in a protest with 130 people from my local," Robles said. "I never thought I would ever see a manifestation like this, not even in my own local."

Robles was overcome with emotion.

"I dropped my picket sign. I grabbed the megaphone, and started yelling and throwing out all my frustration... I wanted to give hope the workers, show them not to be afraid," he said.

The occupation of the Republic Windows and Doors plant caught the attention and support of the entire country. Republic and Bank of America both finally caved to the pressure and negotiated with UE Local 1110. The result was two months' severance pay for each employee, and the deal was seen as a sign of hope in the labor movement.

At a recent Workers World Party Midwest conference, held in the UE Local 1110 hall south of Union Park, Socialist activist Larry Holmes praised the union for its achievement.

"Everyone can learn a lesson from UE workers at Republic who occupied the plant," Holmes said. "That message went all over the world. This is what you need to do to get the bankers' attention, and we gotta get back to that."

Robles, who also spoke at the conference, predicted a time when all oppressed laborers will demand their rights.

"The depression is getting worse each year, no matter what the media says," Robles said. "It's going to happen the same way as Republic. We will be oppressed day by day, year by year until we explode our anger, and it will happen in the whole country."

In February 2009, a California-based company called Serious Materials, specializing in more energy-efficient products, bought Republic Windows and Doors and agreed to give each laid-off employee a job when more positions became available. Robles was one of the first to get his old job back. Although he thinks the new company is "more secure" and able to make better products, he misses many of his coworkers from Republic.

Because of his personal connection with other workers, Robles hopes all of the people who worked with him at Republic Windows and Doors can join him again under the new ownership, regardless of their reputation.

"Here at this company, the lazy people are going to come back. The hard workers are going to come back. The troublemakers... the kiss asses. Everyone is going to come back," he said, "and when that happens, the company will be back to normal."

Recipe for Success

University dining hall workers form union for better pay and benefits

By **ABBIE NAMESTNIK**



Lunch at the Water Tower Campus dining hall. Loyola is one of the last universities in Chicago to unionize. Photo by Abbie Namestnik

At 9 a.m. on a Monday, the Lake Shore Dining Hall at Loyola University Chicago had already been open for three hours. By 10 a.m., the dining facility experienced its second rush of the day. Students filed into the hall, their plates full of eggs, bacon and biscuits that had been prepared by two quiet female workers.

Near the drink station, a girl spilled a glass of chocolate milk, giggling and walking away as a dining worker knelt to clean up the mess. Meanwhile, in the opposite corner of the room, another worker tested the laws of gravity as she

cleared plates from a large circular table – the aftermath of a group of hungry underclassmen boys.

Most of these workers get paid only a dollar more than that \$8.75 meal ticket costs.

Last fall, employees of Loyola's subcontracted dining service, ARAMARK, gained enough signatures (almost 80 percent of the 180 person work force) to earn recognition from their managers that they wished to form a union.

Since the company's recognition of the union, workers are legally bound to keep quiet in exchange for permission to unionize.

When asked to comment on the

unionization at Loyola, ARAMARK communications representative, Kristine Grow, said, "ARAMARK is pro-employee, and we highly value the contributions that all of our employees make as they serve our customers. We have many locations where employees are represented by a union, and we have excellent relationships with those unions."

By the contract's completion, Loyola dining workers will be represented by Local One, a branch of the national service industry worker's union, Unite Here.

Loyola isn't the first to make a move towards social justice. Local One has represented all seven of

Chicago's City Colleges, which were unionized over a decade ago.

In fact, at the two-year public community college, Harold Washington, dining workers receive a reported \$13.25 per hour for their labor.

The University of Illinois at Chicago unionized in the 1980s and it included the university's clerical workers.

The University of Chicago, as well, formed a union under ARAMARK during the 1990s.

DePaul's workers formed a union 4½ years ago. In August 2009, their original contract ended and DePaul switched to Local One, sparking a campaign that passed in early October 2010 and gained even more individual rights for employees.

More recently, in November 2009, Northwestern began harvesting the idea of a union – asking its establishment for \$13.23 per hour and health care coverage.

Aside from the proposed pay raise and medical benefits, Northwestern employees have also earned on-campus privileges ranging from the free use of community libraries, gyms, and parking structures, to discounted classes and free tuition for their children – just as any professor or university-funded staff member would receive.

The success of the most recent campaign at DePaul came as a surprise to all those involved: aside from an average pay rate of \$11.03 per hour, workers will receive health and dental care by the end of the union's contract.

Additionally, DePaul won workers' rights from the immigration language proposed by Local One to the school's subcontractor, Compass Group North America. Included in these rights was a two-year window of job reassurance should an immigrant worker be deported; the right for immigrants to attend meetings conducted in

their first languages; don't ask don't tell policies to protect immigrants from loss of job or benefits due to social security mishaps or name changes; and a paid day off on the day that an immigrant worker within the union becomes a U.S. citizen.

With about 50 percent of Loyola Dining's food service at immigrant status (comprised mainly of Mexican and Chinese workers), contract negotiations for the union, set to take place this spring, should involve similar concepts.

Given DePaul's success, Loyola should be able to promote the same agenda and perhaps gain even more benefits for their workers.

Dan Brown, 22, a senior in the Religious Studies program at DePaul University, is a member of the DePaul committee for Social Justice and a founding member of the school's Living Wage Campaign for food service workers at the university.

"It really comes down to community support," Brown said. "If you have a student body behind the workers, it scares the company and makes them look terrible... if the company looks terrible, the university can retract their contract. As soon as one school sets a precedent, it makes the other universities look foolish. It becomes a citywide and national issue."

Loyola was actually slow to the trend to unionize.

"Loyola is one of the last schools in Chicago to offer living wages to its food service workers... preceding only North Park University, Dominican University, Chicago State University and St. Xavier University," said Kyle Schafer, the union organizer of Local One who will be helping guide negotiations with ARAMARK.

The living wage that Schafer spoke of is the government-set rate for food service industry workers – an

\$11.03 hourly wage that allows workers to live above the poverty line.

Despite this, ARAMARK's Grow insisted the company offers only the best pay and benefits to its employees.

"We provide competitive wages and benefits both for our industry and in the geographies in which we operate, and we are recognized as a top employer in our industry," Grow said.

Opponents of the union fear that raised wages and health benefits for workers will increase the already heightened prices in the dining halls and markets across campus.

However, for a school that promotes a social justice mission, this is just a small price to pay.

In Connecticut, Local One has represented about 80 percent of the universities since as early as the 1970s. Because of the early success of unions in this state, wages at these institutions start at \$17-\$20 per hour for food service industry workers.

In fact, more established universities, like Yale, were able to offer more progressive benefits, such as year-round employment for workers in between semesters to avoid the financial drought of the student dining industry's "off-season."

"We're trying to build a city-wide and nationwide movement," Schafer said. "The more we're able to connect schools across cities and across the states, the stronger workers in the industry are going to be in order to change their lives."

24/7 BREAKING NEWS

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CONGRATULATIONS

To the editors of Mosaic Magazine and
the authors whose works are published
in these pages. We are proud of the
work and efforts of all our Journalism
students.

The Office of the Provost



Homeless in America

*Undocumented immigrants face even
more challenges when they are homeless*

By Elizabeth Noel



Saeed Bajhshandh shuffles his way to the back of the dinner line 60 men deep. He is unshaven and his pants are dirty and slightly torn, but he puts on a smile as he receives his ham sandwich and a ladle full of beans.

Bajhshandh has been living at REST Homeless Shelter in Uptown for more than a year, but he is not complaining. To him, the conditions are much better than the L stations, where he slept for four months prior to coming to the shelter.

When Bajhshandh immigrated

from Tehran, Iran six years ago, this was not how he pictured his American experience. He lost his job at Frdusa, a construction company in Tehran, in 2000 and worked in Germany for three years before coming to the United States in 2003.

Just weeks after getting a job at a construction company in Chicago, he suffered a serious back injury, lost his job, and has had physical and economic problems ever since.

"I worked hard for 16 hours a day in Iran. Now I cannot do this work, but I am not qualified for anything

else," the 56-year-old said in broken English. "I came here for a good life, a good situation. But this is jail to me."

Bajhshandh's is not the only story of an American dream gone bad. The economic downturn has brought an increase in homelessness overall. Immigrants are no exception to this trend.

But according to Erin Ryan, executive director for the Lincoln Park Community Shelter, a Chicago interim housing facility, homeless immigrants encounter more than just a general "falling through the

cracks."

"Even for people who come the United States through a legal channel, things become harder than they imagine and they don't know how to navigate the system," Ryan said. "This is true in general for homelessness, but adding the immigration on top of things makes it that much more overwhelming."

The culture shock and difficulty of the immigration system can magnify economic struggles.

Constance Omandi, 41, immigrated from Nairobi, Kenya, in 2006 to join some family members who were already living in Chicago. She ran a successful product distribution business in Nairobi and was hoping to continue to operate it from the United States until she got her bearings. But in 2008, her profits plummeted with the global economy. Two years later, she found herself at the doors of the Lincoln Park Community Shelter.

Many immigrants do not have families in America that they can turn to for assistance, and for those who do, like Omandi and Bajhshandh, pride will often keep them from asking for help.

"I don't want to be a burden on my family," Omandi said. "It was my decision to come here, not theirs."

Bajhshandh's ex-wife, Ateneh, moved to Chicago in 2000 shortly after they divorced, and now lives

with their 18-year-old son in Skokie. Ateneh is a teacher, but Bajhshandh does not like to go to her for money.

"If I really need her, she helps me, but it makes me feel bad," he said.

"In my culture, the man has the responsibility. Always. And I am not showing that to my son."

According to the Chicago Coalition for the Homeless, there were about 75,000 homeless people in Chicago in 2009. But it is unknown how many are immigrants.

Because of the lack of statistics and uncertainty of immigrant numbers, fighting immigrant homelessness is not an easy task. Shelters and programs often combat homelessness as a problem in its entirety.

"We typically don't cater to specific groups of people," said Anne Bawhay, Director of Foundation Relations at the Chicago Coalition for the Homeless. "We cater to people with common problems, and we work across the demographics of the group. We don't have specific groups for one demographic."

But Omandi and Bajhshandh will not lose hope, and both have found help at the shelters where they stay.

"The most important thing I can do is keep optimistic," Omandi said. "When you feel defeated is the moment you stop trying, and you're never going to get anywhere. And

that's why I came here, right?"

Omandi is on the employment track at the Lincoln Park Community Shelter, working her way through computer and business programs while searching and applying for jobs. She eventually wants to rebuild her product distribution business with her own team of sales people. In the meantime, she teaches Swahili to the volunteers and other residents at the shelter.

"It's always good to share my culture with other people, it helps keep it alive for me," she said. "It helps me remember the importance of it by teaching other people."

Through REST, Bajhshandh was connected with a caseworker who recently found him an apartment. He plans to move in next month. He still does not have a job, but he will have a place of his own.

Bajhshandh returns to the table with his dinner tray in the loud room filled with men wearing blank stares. Before taking a bite, he pulls out a tattered wallet containing only two pictures. Both are school photos of his son, one from 2004 and one from this year, his high school senior picture.

"He wants to become a lawyer," Bajhshandh said with a pleased smile. "When I get my own apartment, he can come visit me. And he will be proud."

IN THE NEWS:

Arizona Called Out On Baseball All-Star Game

Players vow boycott over state's anti-immigrant stance

By: Mariea Murlowski

More controversy erupts as the 2011 Major League Baseball All-Star Game is scheduled for July 12 in Phoenix, and the state is expected to spend nearly \$60 million on the event. But this year's most anticipated baseball game has its critics because of Arizona's anti-immigration stance.

MLB Commissioner Bud Selig has received pressure to move the game elsewhere, as fans across the country are voicing their disapproval by asking fans, sponsors and players to veto the All-Star game if it remains in Arizona.

Chicago White Sox manager and Venezuelan native, Ozzie Guillen, expressed his support of immigration reform in 2010 saying, "[This country] cannot live without us immigrants." For now, the game will remain in Phoenix.

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Preparing people to lead extraordinary lives

Street Stories

Chicago taxi drivers share tales of seeking their Chicago fortunes

By Kate Dessa

A taxi waiting in the six-car line outside the Sofitel Chicago Water Tower Hotel whips around the corner of Rush and Chestnut streets as the bellhop blows his whistle. Lemlemu Alemneh moves his taxi forward as another cab pulls up behind him. Six days a week he sits outside the hotel awaiting the next whistle and his next fare.

Alemneh, a 31-year-old, Ethiopian immigrant who works independently in Chicago, represents one of the thousands of immigrant cabbies in the city. Alemneh endures 80 plus hours in order to make ends meet. He spends anywhere from 12-20 hours a day driving in his taxicab, but he says it's all worth it to him.

"I came from Africa for a better life in America. Ethiopia can be very unsafe and I was treated poorly, so I entered the lottery to come here," Alemneh said.

The largest groups of immigrant cabdrivers are made up of Nigerians, Pakistanis, Somalians, and Ghanaians according to a recent study done by the University of Illinois at Chicago's School of Labor and Employment Relations, which surveyed 920 city cabdrivers.

The study also found that 90 percent of Chicago cab drivers are foreign-born, immigrating from 76 different countries and speaking over 100 unique languages. Demssachew Woldeamanueo, 46, is a 24 Seven driver from Ethiopia as well, he too left his homeland to get away from bad treatment.

"I was a soldier, I served my



Cab drivers line up at Sofitel Chicago Water Tower Hotel.

country. Then a new government came in and they would not give my previous rank and benefits. They told me that was under the old government and that I was now a soldier under their new rules. They treated me terribly and so I left," Woldeamanueo said.

Woldeamanueo, has now been in the United States for more than 12 years, and is very thankful to be away from the oppression brought upon him by the Ethiopian government, but still sees hardships here in the U.S.

"After only a few years in the U.S. I was deported, so I fled to Canada. I stayed there for six years and then they deported me. But since I came from America, I was deported back the U.S. Once I arrived I was put in jail for four months, I pled asylum and it was finally accepted," Woldeamanueo said.

There are many reasons for the

abundance of immigrant cabbies including low pay, low barrier to entry and an established network in which taxi drivers help family and friends find jobs.

"There is a good deal of 'network hiring' for these jobs, as particular groups of immigrants begin working in the industry and connect their friends and relatives," said Gary Basi, a professor of Law at UCLA, who conducted a study titled, *Taxi Drivers and the Regulation of the Taxi industry in Los Angeles*.

"Driving a taxi is a job with low barriers to entry, particularly for fairly well educated immigrants who speak enough English to interact with passengers and dispatchers," Basi said.

Aldabert Zawadzki is one of those cabbies.

Zawadzki politely asks passengers if he can use his Bluetooth to make phone calls as he swerves in and out of traffic downtown. His booming voice switches over from clear English to Polish in a matter of seconds.

Zawadzki immigrated here with his family 20 years ago and has been in the taxi industry ever since. He recently upgraded to a van cab to accommodate more patrons.

His is a story of opportunity, not asylum. But no matter the reason, driving a taxi in Chicago offers cabbies the opportunity for a better life.

"Once my plea for asylum was accepted, Ethiopian Demssachew Woldeamanueo said, "I came to the one place I know that has nice, accepting, genuine people: Chicago."

PATRIOT ACT

CHICAGO MINUTEMAN TRADES BORDER PATROL FOR RUN AT THE BALLOT BOX

By Kristin Thometz

"Peanuts! Get your peanuts here!" As a boy, Carl Segvich yelled this countless times as he marched up and down the stands of both Wrigley Field and Comiskey Park selling peanuts.

This self-described American patriot was raised according to traditional American family values, which included a love of baseball and his country.

Segvich, 48, grew up in a working class family in Chicago's Bridgeport neighborhood, which has historically been a hodgepodge of ethnicities and immigrants.

"I grew up in a very old house on a block with only three houses. It was a very poor block," Segvich said. "The house was literally crooked. It was on a slant."

Despite growing up among immigrants, Segvich said he doesn't like seeing convenience stores in different languages. But this is minor compared to his discontent with government programs that encourage the use of foreign languages to aid immigrants.

"That's a problem because they're using my tax dollars," Segvich said. "For a person to be bilingual is a blessing. For a community to be bilingual is a curse."

As a result, he joined a group that shared his patriotism, the Chicago Minuteman Project. Created in 2005, the Project sought to draw attention to the border security and illegal immigration issues in Arizona.

The Chicago Minuteman Project is a local offshoot of the Arizona Minuteman Project, whose central mission is protecting and patrolling

the United States border.

While their brothers out West patrol the border, the members of the Chicago chapter pass out pamphlets; one member is even running for public office.

Segvich is taking action against the government.

"I'm running to fight corruption and the Chicago way," he said.

In the midterm 2010 elections, he ran as the Republican candidate for the position of the 11th District Cook County Commissioner against his neighbor, Democratic incumbent John Daley.

"We pass each other at the coffee shop," Segvich said. "It's always a situation where we exchange pleasantries."

Rick Biesada, president of the Chicago Minuteman Project, has known Segvich for 10 years, and described him as a "pretty good guy."



Carl Segvich at McKinley Park Library.
Photos courtesy of Citizens for Segvich.

The Chicago Minuteman Project educates the public about its mission through pamphlets and protests.

"The organization is to promote

American sovereignty by educating people about the Constitution," Segvich said. "Our federal immigration laws are obviously the center-piece of the movement."

The government is "discriminating against American citizens and [illegal immigrants] are getting a free ride," Biesada said. "Our main beef is with the politicians...not the illegal immigrants."

Even so, Segvich said he is upset about the chaos illegal immigrants are causing in the United States.

"They're depressing our wages and stealin' our jobs," he said.

Segvich cautioned against believing the liberal claims that these are jobs Americans refuse to do.

"They're jobs Americans won't do at that pay scale," he said.

According to Biesada, The Chicago Minuteman Project is not against immigration altogether.

"Anyone who wants to come here and make a better life, we applaud it," Biesada said. "But they need to come through the right way, thinking they might either cut my head off or put me in prison," Segvich continued.

As for those who are already in the United States illegally, "they're to be duly deported unless they need to be prisoned first," Segvich said.

Joshua Hoyt, director for the Illinois Coalition for Immigrant and Refugee Rights, disagrees with Segvich.

"That is not a solution," Hoyt said. Deporting illegal immigrants would "turn the U.S. into a state of hunting down people and destroying families."

Hoyt said the solution is to grant legal status for everyone who is in the country illegally that have not committed any crimes.

"We have to follow the laws that are already on the books," Segvich said. "We don't need reform."

His opponent for office, John Daley, son of the late Chicago mayor Richard J. Daley and brother of former mayor Richard M. Daley, thinks differently.

It is up to the federal government to address the issue of immigration reform, Daley said.

"This nation has been built on immigrants," he said. Daley welcomes immigration but said it needs to be done legally.

Segvich is prepared for his



Carl Segvich at a Tea-Party rally.

long battle ahead with illegal immigration and the Chicago machine.

He may have lost the race against Daley, but that doesn't discourage him.

"We received 30 percent of the vote," he said. "We're going to take it like grown ups that have been beaten down for years. We're never gonna give up."

Segvich began running for office 22 years ago and never won a race until 2008. That year he was elected Chicago 11th Ward Committeeman (2008).

"But I hung there like Abraham Lincoln. He lost many times, went bankrupt, had a nervous breakdown and then ran for president and won," Segvich said.

His future political plans resemble those of Lincoln's political career:

"My dream job would to be a United States Senator."

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A Man of Faith

PRIEST FINDS HOME IN CHICAGO

By Lauren Rossi

The Rev. Nhat Le sits in a small, plainly decorated room in a rectory in suburban Chicago. Dressed in a traditional black suit with a white clerical collar, the Roman Catholic priest recounts the experiences in his life that have brought him to his current position in the church.

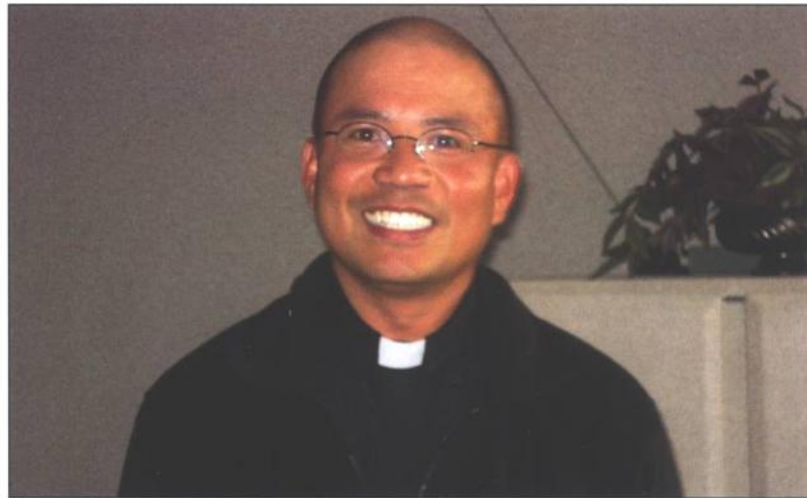
Originally from Nhatrang, a small town 300 miles outside of Saigon, South Vietnam, Le overcame insurmountable obstacles to become a priest. His strong faith in religion helped him through times of terror and poverty while growing up in the communist country.

His determination and love of the Catholic faith has led him from Vietnam to become one of the first foreign associate pastors to serve at St. Raymond Church in suburban Mount Prospect. The 39-year-old priest believes that his presence at the church helps reflect the diversity of Catholics around the world.

"Catholicism in Latin means 'universalism,'" Le said. "It is a universal religion. It is made up of all kinds of people from different backgrounds."

Le was born in 1971, during the height of the Vietnam War, to a school teacher and a housewife. He was the seventh of nine siblings.

In 1975, the Northern Vietnamese troops took control of Southern Vietnam, creating the Socialist Republic of Vietnam. The effects of communism drastically changed his



The Rev. Nhat Le immigrated from Vietnam. Photo by Lauren Rossi

family's way of life.

"My childhood was full of suffering," he said.

When Le was four, his family tried to escape the country. The large family journeyed south to the Pacific Ocean. They were hoping to find a boat to take them to Thailand, but that opportunity never presented itself to the family.

"After two months, we could not find a boat to take us, so we had to go back," Le recalled. "When we left, everyone thought that we were gone for good, and the people took everything."

When his family returned home, they found their possessions had been stolen. The family then encountered an even more unpleasant surprise.

"Vietnam soldiers were occupying our house," he said. "But they

eventually allowed us live in half of the house."

After the Communists banned religion in the country, his father, a Catholic school teacher, was no longer employed. He was forced to become a farmer in order to support the family.

Though Le was allowed to attend school, he feels that he received a poor education from unqualified teachers.

"The school taught propaganda and basically tried to brainwash us," he said.

In spite of the poor education at school, Le's father taught him about subjects beyond Vietnam. Throughout his childhood, his father shared foreign books about various topics. Le's favorite literary works were French comic books depicting various Bible stories. "I

loved learning about the religion through the colorful pictures," Le said.

Le feels the greatest blessing in his life was the fortitude of his family.

"For 15 years, my family endured terrible suffering and starvation, but every single one of us survived," he said.

After graduating high school in 1989, Le was forced to enlist in the military for two years, a mandate issued on every 18-year-old male by the Vietnamese government. Le completed his obligatory service in the Navy and returned home.

In 1991, the collapse of the Soviet Union had a profound effect on the manner in which Vietnamese government conducted its affairs.

"They wanted to improve their image to the world and engage in the free market," Le stated.

As a result, the Vietnamese government allowed the Catholic Church to reopen five seminaries. At the age of 21, Le made the life-changing decision to join the seminary in 1992.

"I always loved the faith and looking after the spiritual well-being of others," he said. "I felt it was something I was just meant to do."

While the Vietnamese government allowed the seminaries to operate, they imposed strict regulations on the Catholic Church. The church was only allowed to accept a few seminarians. However, the bishop of his diocese was allowed to send students abroad if they received scholarships.

"I was sent by the bishop to the United States to study," Le recalled. "During the flight, I looked out of the window as the airplane crossed over the United States. I was just in awe of this great country."

Following his studies at Mundelein Seminary in Illinois, Le was ordained by Cardinal Francis George in 2005. Due to the problems priests were facing in Vietnam, he was granted permission by the Archdiocese of Chicago to remain in Illinois.

Le spends his days performing the various functions of a priest at St. Raymond Church. "I love being of comfort and guidance to people," Le said.

The Rev. Steve Dombroski is the pastor at St. Raymond. The 47-year-old priest believes Le has been a great benefit to the parish.

"[Le] has contributed by being good-natured, and shares his experiences and gifts such as

singing," Dombroski said. "He is a valuable connection to the Vietnamese community in Chicago."

John Lorbach, 59, is a deacon at St. Raymond Church and also has a positive view of the associate pastor.

"His Vietnamese traditions, culture and his wonderful stories, reminds us that the Catholic Church is a universal church," Lorbach said.

Though Le's journey to the United States is over, he still faces hardships. Most of his family still resides in Vietnam, including his mother, who suffered a stroke 10 years ago.

"She is very frail and looks much older than her age," Le said.

In addition, soon after Le arrived in North America, his father died.

"It was very unfortunate," Le said. "I was the only child in my family that was unable to attend my father's funeral."

But Le does not regret anything that brought him to his current home. Le credits his journey from communist Vietnam to the United States to a higher power.

"I truly believe that God led me here," Le said. "It has not been easy, but it has been spiritually rewarding."

IN THE NEWS:

AS BORDER SECURITY STIFFENS, USE OF SMUGGLERS RISES

By Kristen Thometz

The number of illegal immigrants in the United States has decreased by 10 percent according to the Department of Homeland Security.

However, at the same time, the use of coyotes to smuggle people across the border has risen.

"We continue to build up border protection and security, so illegal immigrants are eliciting the help of coyotes," said Wendy Sefsaf, Communications Director for the American Immigration Council.

Between 2005-2007, four out of five immigrants were smuggled across the border illegally by a coyote.

Sefsaf said this is a trend that will continue because of the lack of a regulatory system for immigration.

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Hardcourt Becomes a Passport

Immigrant finds basketball is ticket toward acceptance

By Abbie Namestnik

It's morning – a new day met with a sore back from sleeping on concrete, gunshots firing outside the abandoned chicken factory where hundreds of families have gathered to escape harm. There are no bathrooms, just forests and leaves; there is no privacy, just thousands of eyes witnessing every move.

This was the reality of Nail Sabanagic, who at age 6, was living in a refugee camp with his mother and sister, while his father served in the army to protect Bosnia's independence.

Sabanagic, 22, is a legal immigrant from Velika Kladusa, Bosnia and a senior in Loyola University Chicago's education program. But Sabanagic recalls a time when as a child, he collected AK47 bullets that he found in his back yard, his life confined by 2 p.m. state-enforced curfews.

"Once, I was out after curfew and I was so scared that I peed my pants," Sabanagic admitted with a smirk. "For me it was normal – I didn't think anything of it, that's just how my world was."

Before immigrating to Chicago on Sept. 12, 1996, Sabanagic had lived in three separate refugee camps, had been separated from family members, and had even been smuggled across national borders by a "coyote," which is slang for a human trafficker.

Having never attended school while in Bosnia due to the war,

Sabanagic was thrown into the third grade at Swift Elementary School in North Chicago knowing only how to say "hello" and a few four-letter expletives.

"I was thrown into the fire," Sabanagic recalled. "It took me only six months to learn English, but then again, it was learn or die."

Still, more obstacles stood in the way. When the Sabanagics came to America, a slight culture shock followed.

"The only dark-skinned person we had ever seen before coming to America was Bill Cosby – and he was on TV," Sabanagic's older sister, Naira, said.

Sabanagic quickly assimilated into inner-city schools, taking on the interests of his peers – some of which included listening to rap music and playing basketball. To fit in with the group, Sabanagic recalls joining pick-up games – an arena where he learned how to fit in and survive in the rough neighborhood.

"The only sport at school was basketball," Sabanagic said. "My parents wouldn't let me go outside by myself because kids would mess with you, chase you. Basketball was the only recreation I had."

Sabanagic continued his education at Lane Tech High School – a place populated by a demographic foreign to him: American, middle-class white kids. He decided to join the basketball team there; his first time playing organized sports.

"Basketball gave him perspective

into American society and other cultures," said Naira Sabanagic, 25. "He used to want to fit in with those guys because it was the cool thing to do, but now that he's been emerged in so many cultures, he's found his own identity within them."

At Lane Tech, Sabanagic quickly became the captain of his team, allowing him to make all-conference during his senior year.

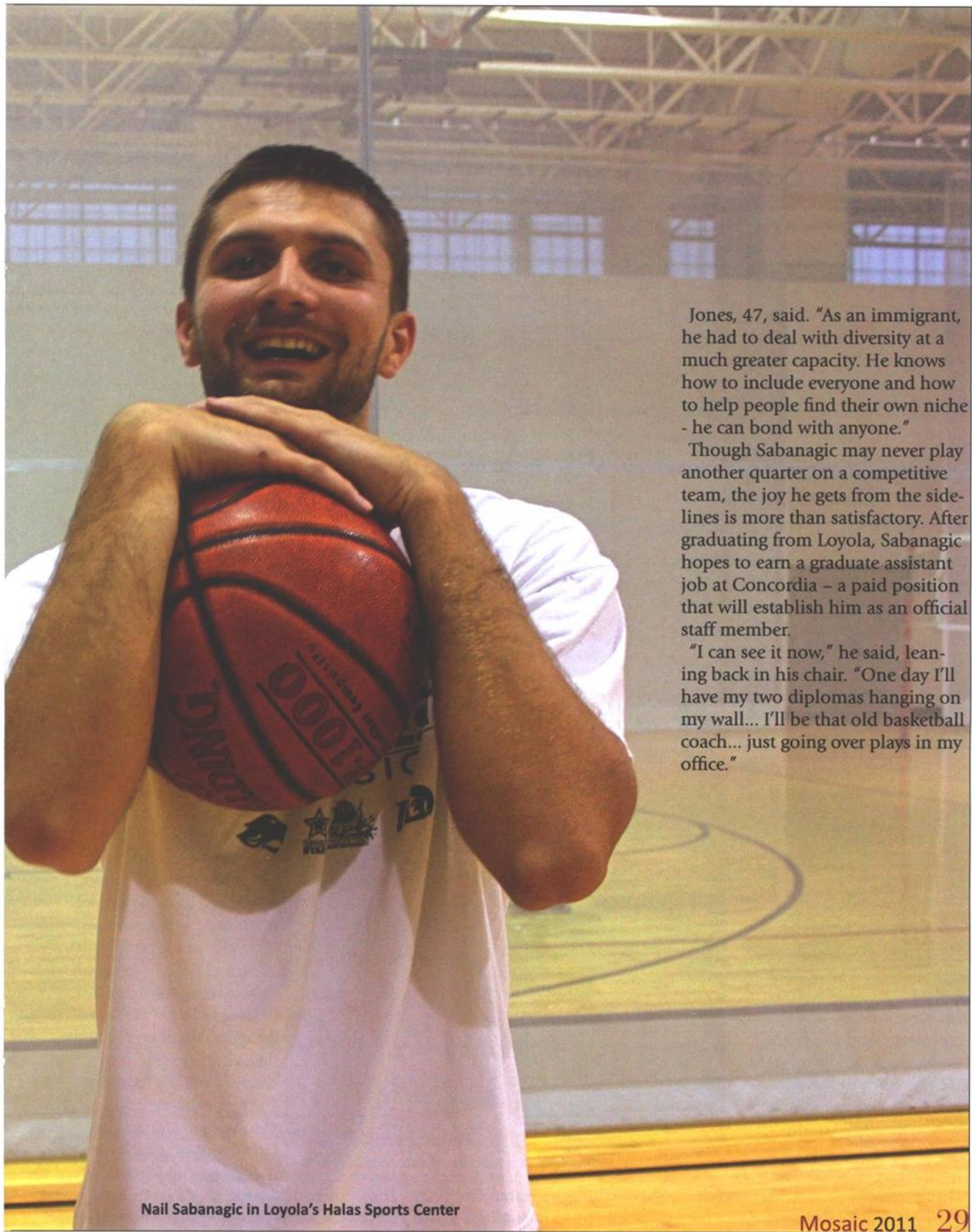
Standing at an imposing 6 feet, 4 inches tall, Sabanagic could have easily played college basketball. However, after a family member was laid off, he traded basketball for a factory job in order to pay for his education at Loyola.

Tyler Jones, Sabanagic's friend, mentor, colleague and former coach, noticed Sabanagic's dedication to the team and gave him a coaching position at Lane in 2006. This meant that as a freshman in college, he would be serving as a role model and leader for kids only a few years younger than he.

"I went to class during the week, worked at the factory at night and helped coach the team on Saturday mornings," Sabanagic said. "It was difficult, but that's when I really fell in love with coaching."

After much success at Lane, and following Jones's promotion to head coach at Concordia University in 2008, Jones was able to offer Sabanagic his current position at Concordia as an assistant coach.

"I knew Sabanagic was well liked,"



Jones, 47, said. "As an immigrant, he had to deal with diversity at a much greater capacity. He knows how to include everyone and how to help people find their own niche - he can bond with anyone."

Though Sabanagic may never play another quarter on a competitive team, the joy he gets from the sidelines is more than satisfactory. After graduating from Loyola, Sabanagic hopes to earn a graduate assistant job at Concordia - a paid position that will establish him as an official staff member.

"I can see it now," he said, leaning back in his chair. "One day I'll have my two diplomas hanging on my wall... I'll be that old basketball coach... just going over plays in my office."

Nail Sabanagic in Loyola's Halas Sports Center

A

LIFE IN LIMBO

Illegal immigrant succeeds in school, but without citizenship, future is uncertain

By Elizabeth Noel

Alaa Mukahhal parks her car at the Bridgeview Mosque Foundation, a Muslim haven in the midst of the diverse Southwest suburb. She steps out of the car, pulling a denim jacket over her black hijab, and greets an old Arabic teacher with a kiss and hug. She has a brief phone conversation with her mother in flawless Arabic punctuated with an occasional English term, an "OK" or a "yes."

"My family calls that Arabish," says the 24-year-old, flipping her cell phone shut. "We make up words that don't exist in either language, but they make sense to us."

Mukahhal was translating for her parents' landlord at age 7. By fourth grade, she was reading at a sixth grade level. She is a University of Illinois graduate, a social justice advocate, an aspiring architect. And she is an undocumented immigrant.

"I was born in Kuwait, but that does not in any way make me Kuwaiti," said Mukahhal, who has lived most of her life in the United States. "I consider myself American, even though I don't have

the papers and number to prove it."

Though she was born in Kuwait, she and her Palestinian parents, Mustafa and Asmaa, were forced to move to Jordan in 1991 in the

before selling all they owned to come to America for a better life in 1993.

"I was in second grade, and it was very bizarre, worlds apart from

what I knew," Mukahhal said. "But my parents told me, 'If you want to fit in, if you want to succeed, you have to work hard.' My grades, my education, that's all that mattered to me."

After mastering English, a feat she attributes to Dr. Seuss and Power Rangers, Mukahhal soon excelled in her schoolwork in every subject.

"Alaa is one of the brightest people I know. She was always taking advanced classes that none of the rest of us could get into," said Meha Ahmad, 22, a classmate and friend of Mukahhal's at Aqsa, an Arabic-focused high school in Bridgeview. "She even designed the logo for my dad's bakery. She just thrives on hard work, and she's so capable."

Mukahhal went to the University of Illinois in Champaign and became one of the top students in her class. She studied architecture, a



Alaa Mukahhal at Aqsa Arabic School. Photos by Elizabeth Noel

midst of the Persian Gulf War. The family lived in Jordan for two years

one of the top students in her class. She studied architecture, a



Above: Mukahhal with Meha Ahmed; Below: Mukahhal, in front of her mosque.

passion that grew from her natural artistic abilities and encounters with the work of Zaha Hadid, an Iraqi Muslim and the first female architect to win the Pritzker Prize.

But upon graduation in May of 2010, the ever-assiduous Mukahhal faced the job market without a Social Security card, without a green

card, and without citizenship. No one asked for these documents all through her schooling, but now she can't go further without them.

"Right now I feel like I'm stuck in a limbo," she said. "I can't move back, can't move forward. And it's frustrating because all I've ever known is 'work hard, be successful.' I'm desperate for a chance."

Overqualified but undocumented,

Mukahhal works as a cashier at a local store, trying every angle she can to get her papers in what she calls a "green card lottery system."

"My parents and I got a lawyer. We asked him how we could stand in line to get papers," she said. "He told us, 'There is no line to stand in....' To say that our immigration system is broken is such an understatement."

Mukahhal is not scared of admitting that she is an illegal immigrant. She hopes that sharing her story will inspire others, especially other Arab immigrants, to stand up for immigration reform and the Dream Act, a proposed legislation that will give qualified undocumented youth the opportunity for a six year conditional path to citizenship if they get a college degree or serve in the military for two years.

"Alaa's story is so unique because it drives home the point that immigration is not only a Latino issue," said Seemi Chaudry, a communication organizer for the Immigration Coalition for Immigrant Refugee Rights. "If American Muslims are more engaged civically, there will be no other future than a future with immigration reform."

Until that day, Mukahhal will not sit still. She will continue to sketch blueprints in anticipation of getting a job in her field, and one day opening her own architecture firm. She will break down any door that stands in her way to getting her documents. She will vigorously fight for immigration reform.

"We just have to wait for the Dream Act, for immigration reform, wait for Congress," Mukahhal said with a strong brown-eyed stare and a level voice. "I know that I'll have to wait for awhile, but I have to be optimistic because I strongly believe in this country. It's beautiful that there is always room for change. We just need time."

Sins of the Father

FATHER CROSSES BORDER ILLEGALLY; HOPES TO MAKE BETTER LIFE FOR AMERICAN-BORN DAUGHTERS

By Brittany Arnold



Alfredo Munoz picks up an order at the Chicago restaurant where he works. Photo by: Brittany Arnold

Alfredo Munoz works as a waiter at one of Chicago's most prominent Italian restaurants while maintaining what most casual observers would consider a normal lifestyle. But what many customers don't know is the cultural struggle he faces on a daily basis: he is an illegal immigrant.

Alfredo, 27 and his wife Claudia, 23, are undocumented, but their two daughters are American citizens. Not only did Alfredo and Claudia come over from their native

town of Jalisco, Mexico illegally and struggle to stay in the United States, but they constantly fear what might happen if they are deported.

In June 1998, Alfredo Munoz, then 15, and his older brother Marco, then at 17 joined 23 other Mexican immigrants in escaping to the United States. Tightly packed into a commercial van, they were all set on heading to Arizona.

"I can remember leaving Mexico with my brother. I was only 15-years-old at the time, but I knew in order to have a better life and more opportunity, we had to escape

to the United States," Munoz said.

But the ride didn't last very long. Nearly 30 minutes into their travels, U.S. immigration agents caught up to the van. Instinctively, the brothers jumped out of the moving vehicle and landed in a nearby ditch to hide out for the night.

Early the next morning, a family passing by picked up the brothers and dropped them off in Arizona.

"We had to work for the family who gave us a ride while we waited for our other brother to come. We were just grateful to be in the U.S, it didn't matter what type of work we

had to do," Munoz said.

Munoz wasn't the only one who had to struggle to come to the U.S. His young wife Claudia did the same.

"In order to have a better life I needed my wife to be with me. We were ready to start a family away from the troubles in Mexico," he said.

Having already crossed the border once, Munoz took the chance and crossed again for true love. Making the journey a second time to bring his wife into the country was just as difficult as the first.

"Even though I was very afraid to go back to Mexico, I couldn't live here without my wife. She is the most important part of my life," Munoz said.

Traveling through Arizona once again, the couple made it safely across the border undetected.

"I was so afraid that we were going to be stopped and sent back to

Mexico," Claudia said. "Alfredo had worked for a year to start a life for us in the U.S. and I didn't want that all to be lost for me."

The newlyweds were separated from their families at a very young age. But the purpose of the struggle they faced was to make a better life for themselves and their new family. Their two daughters were born in the U.S., which makes them U.S. citizens and made the struggle worthwhile, Alfredo and Claudia said.

Both daughters, Citlali, 6 and Alitzel, 2 are now able to grow up in a country where they can be educated and have opportunities for the rest of their lives.

"I am so grateful that my husband has given me and my daughters the best opportunity possible for education, jobs, and lifestyle. They deserve nothing but the best and that is what we now have," said Claudia while cooking dinner for

her family.

The Munoz family is content with the lifestyle they have created. They have a beautiful home on the West Side of Chicago and the luxury of homeschooling Alitzel while Citlali attends preschool at Columbia Explorers Academy.

"Working as a full-time waiter in the city is difficult sometimes because I want to spend as much time as possible with my family, but providing for them is top priority," Alfredo said.

But the constant worry of what would happen to their daughters if immigration authorities were to step in will not subside.

"I can't even imagine my daughters being taken away from me. It would be horrible," Claudia said.

Alfredo added, "Having worked so hard to achieve everything we have in the last 12 years would all come to an end without citizenship."



Congratulations Mosaic Magazine 2011

OPEN FOR BUSINESS

*IMMIGRANT
ENTREPRENEURS THRIVE
ALONG DEVON AVENUE
BUSINESS DISTRICT*
By LEIGH BURMESCH



One of Devon Avenue's many colorful storefronts. Photo by Leigh Burmesch

Almaz Yigizaw's favorite American meal is a bun-less hamburger, cooked in a frying pan, topped with hot sauce. She first developed a taste for that meal as a hardworking biology student with ambitions of entering the field of microbiology.

That was 28 years ago. Tizaw, 46, is now the owner and primary cook of the Ethiopian Diamond, a restaurant which serves up some of the finest Ethiopian food in Chicago.

Yigizaw immigrated to the United States from Ethiopia at the age of 16. Initially set on a career in the sciences, Yigizaw was enticed by an entrepreneurship program at Truman College that was specifically geared toward Ethiopians.

After a class project required her to create a restaurant business plan, Yigizaw, on a whim, decided to put her plan into action. In 1996 she opened her own Ethiopian restaurant, the first on Chicago's North Side. However, Yigizaw is still willing to admit, "Every now

and then I do crave a hotdog or a hamburger."

Yigizaw is among the growing number of immigrant small business owners in the United States. According to the Small Business Administration, Office of Advocacy, immigrants are 30 percent more likely to start a small business than non-immigrants.

According to the same study, immigrants constitute almost 17 percent of the country's new business owners.

Aimie Zander has seen this growth

first hand. Zander, 33, is the executive director of the West Ridge Chamber of Commerce, which covers the area between Peterson and Howard and Ridge and Kedzie.

"In the past 10 years, we have seen a lot more immigrants who are coming to the United States just to open up businesses," she said.

Ramesh Mandari, 49, came to the United States in 1978 from India looking for better job opportunities. Three years later he opened up a saree shop, Resham's.

"Business is in our blood," Mandari said, "I was born into the same saree business. It is what I know."

However, Zander said owning a small business doesn't come as easily for most immigrants. "Nine times out of 10, it doesn't work out," Zander said.

Zander said that on average, most businesses last for less than a year. "Owning a small business is definitely difficult if you don't have a business plan," Zander said. "And a lot of people don't."

Additionally, adjusting to traditional American customs is one of the biggest challenges immigrant business owners face, Zander explained.

The West Ridge Chamber of Commerce tries to better educate immigrants on American business

practices by offering informational classes, focusing on how to make their businesses more appealing to American consumers.

"In a lot of countries it is fine if your floor is cracked or dirty. But here it is not OK. Not if you want people to come back," Zander said.

Nari Nagrani was fortunate enough to learn the ropes from the small business he worked at in New York City. Nagrani, 64, owner of Niketan, a pristinely kept silk shop on Devon Avenue, decided to open up his own business after he moved to Chicago.

Nagrani, originally from India, has been in business for the past 25 years and remains unfazed by the state of the economy. Nagrani said business at Niketan has slowed down a bit, however, he said his business, "changes like everyone else's."

According to a March 2009 *Wall Street Journal* blog article, immigrant values such as thriftiness, avoidance of excess debt, and reliance on family support help many immigrant-owned businesses endure the economic recession longer than other businesses. However, the economic recession has still managed to affect some immigrant-run small businesses.

"I had to take money out of my own pocket," confessed Sumittra

Pikulsom, 60, who immigrated to the United States from Thailand in 1990. Pikulsom opened her own Thai restaurant, Summer, just three years ago. "The first and second year," Pikulsom said, "We didn't make a lot of money, we lost money. I thought I wouldn't survive."

However, now on Summer's third year, Pikulsom said her loyal staff is what has helped control her worries.

Pikulsom, who immigrated to the United States 20 years ago, said the language barrier was what she feared most, "In my country we don't use English."

"A lot of our immigrants may speak some English, but they don't read it as well as they should," Zander said.

Immigrant small business owners comprise more than 40 percent of the business in the West Ridge area. For these immigrants, filing taxes and health insurance benefits are just a few of the business related documents immigrants have a hard time understanding. "Language is definitely an issue," Zander said.

Regardless of the obstacles facing immigrant small business owners, their small businesses allow them to bring their own culture to the U.S.

For Yigizaw, the Ethiopian Diamond has given her a chance to, "know people," she said, pouring cups of traditional Ethiopian coffee imported from Kaffa, where coffee beans were originally cultivated.

Since the Ethiopian Diamond opened 14 years ago, six more Ethiopian restaurants have sprung up on the North Side of Chicago—Competition that Yigizaw says is welcome.

"I am introducing Ethiopian culture to America," she said. "If I can contribute to the city somehow, then I am happy."



Inside Ramesh Manar's saree shop, Resham's. Photo by Leigh Burmesch

LET THEM EAT CREPES

*POLISH-BORN
RESTAURANTEURS
SERVE UP
INTERNATIONAL
FLAVOR WITH
CREPERIE*

By **KATHERINE MURPHY**



Matt Goleba and Luke Moczyolowski, owners of Crepe Crave. Photo by Katherine Murphy

Crepe Crave is a Parisian creperie combined with an Italian gelateria and is the brainchild of two Polish immigrants. You might call Crepe Crave the United Nations of food.

"It was a niche that we saw as an opportunity," said Maciej Goleba, 30, one of the owners. "We saw a bigger opportunity with crepes than with Polish food."

Co-owners Goleba, and Lukasz Moczyolowski, 28, traveled throughout Europe and saw authentic street vendors selling crepes. This inspired the men to open a creperie in Chicago's Wicker Park neighborhood that would allow customers to watch crepes being made.

"The thing that differentiates us is that we have the display cooking, just like a crepe stand," Goleba said.

Goleba and Moczyolowski met in 2002 during their sophomore year at DePaul University. Their friendship quickly blossomed as they discovered how much they had in common.

Both were finance majors, emigrated from Poland with their families for a more advantageous life, had no formal cooking training and perhaps most importantly, both had creative business endeavors they wanted to pursue after graduation.

After taking numerous classes together, Maciej, who refers to

himself as Matt, and Lukasz, who prefers to be called Luke, graduated from DePaul in 2005. For the next two years, both worked the corporate lifestyle at Verizon.

In 2007, after leaving Verizon, Goleba and Moczyolowski opened their first business, a small window washing company in Chicago's Lakeview neighborhood.

Goleba said that it was during this time of self-employment that they developed the recipe for their next endeavor, a crepe restaurant.

"We bounced ideas off of each other and did research. It took a while, but we finally got around to it," Goleba said.

"We began researching the crepe



Left: Goleba and Moczyolowski work in their viewable cooking area; Right: Goleba makes coffee at his restaurant. Photos by Katherine Murphy

market in Chicago and realized that there was a void," Moczyolowski said.

In addition to crepes, Goleba and Moczyolowski saw gelato as a great business opportunity. There are only a few gelato places in the city, and their biggest competition, located nearby, closes down for the winter. Goleba said the addition of gelato has been a bonus, bringing in a different demographic than crepe seekers. The 18 flavors don't take up a lot of space either.

With the overall restaurant concept developed, scouting a location was the first major step for the owners. They looked for a place in the city with good foot traffic. A quaint office space at 1752 W. North Ave. met their needs.

After signing a lease in February 2009, the waiting game began. Getting permits from the city was the biggest obstacle and when they finally received them in the middle of May, construction, paperwork and the final planning stages began.

Naming the creperie was another difficult task said Goleba. So, a contest was opened to the public to name the restaurant. Out of 400 unique submissions, they chose the name Crepe Crave.

Crepe Crave opened on Oct. 21, 2009 and has gained in popularity

since. With savory crepes including Chicken Florentine and Pizza, as well as a variety of sweet crepes like Nutella with fruit and S'mores, Crepe Crave has something for everyone.

The restaurant seems quite like a neighborhood melting pot. Steady traffic of people from all walks of life stopped in at Crepe Crave on a Sunday morning during brunch.

A family with a small child peering at his dessert being made, a group of girls in workout gear, students working on a project, a couple on a date and even a hipster with multicolored hair were there during the brunch rush.

The crepes range from \$3.75 to \$7.50, while the gelato is \$2.90 for a regular and \$3.75 for a large.

Sami Rageb, 31, frequents Crepe Crave for the display cooking and the variety of items on the menu.

"I can see what's going on and I can get anything depending on what I'm in the mood for," he said.

Milwaukee resident, Jory Marcinczyk, 20, said she stops in here every time she's in town. She said the assortment of menu options is what keeps her coming back.

"The variety makes me happy. This place makes me happy," Marcinczyk said. "I'm here pretty often."

Goleba said the success of Crepe Crave was a "collaborative effort" with the help of family and friends. Prior to opening they held many tastings for their families and friends in order to narrow down their crepe menu to 26 dessert and savory crepes.

Goleba and Moczyolowski hired four employees, but are frequently assisted by those closest to them. In fact, relatives consistently contribute time, money, labor and encouragement.

Moczyolowski's cousin, 28-year-old Dan Lasek, works here.

"My uncle, Luke's dad, came and helped out during the construction period," Lasek said. "It's a family affair, everyone loves to come in and hang out, eat and talk at least once a week. I think it's also helped us grow closer as friends and as a family."

Goleba and Moczyolowski said their families came to the United States seeking more prosperous lives. Both also said that their families are extremely proud of all that they have accomplished and have never ceased to support them throughout the entire process.

"We couldn't have asked for a more supportive and enthusiastic family," Lasek said.

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IMMIGRANT ENTREPRENEURS
BOOST CHICAGO'S ECONOMY

By Mariea Murlowski



Exterior of The Gage on south Michigan Avenue, one of Irish immigrant Billy Lawless' Chicago restaurants. *Photo By Kate Dessa*

Billy Lawless immigrated to the United States from Galway, Ireland in 1997 and opened several restaurants in the Chicago area including Irish Oak and The Grafton (which he recently sold), and The Gage on south Michigan Avenue.

"I came to America as a challenge...and to see what you Yanks were up to," Lawless said jokingly in his Irish brogue as he sipped his Irish coffee from behind the bar.

Chicago is known as a hub of immigration, with an immigrant-friendly mayor and plenty of opportunity. This city is a popular destination for immigrants looking to start a business of their own.

"Chicago is a sanctuary for

immigrants like me," said Lawless, 59, "and a leader of immigrants rights."

America is known as the land of opportunity, but unfortunately, those opportunities have been sparse the past couple of years amidst the worst economic recession since the Great Depression.

While many companies have come and gone in Chicago during these last couple of years, immigrants hold the key to success during an economic downfall, and Chicago can thank them for helping keep the city afloat.

A U.S. Small Business Administration study revealed that nearly 1.5 million immigrants own U.S. businesses, generating \$67 billion in

revenue in 2008. Locally in Illinois, immigrants own 14.5 percent of all businesses, according to the same study.

Increasing numbers of immigrant entrepreneurs are flocking to major cities like Chicago, and driving the economy, even more so than native-born Americans, during these tough economic times.

Jonathan Bowles, director of the Center for an Urban Future in New York City and co-author of the Center's 2007 study on immigrant entrepreneurs, says immigrant business owners are more willing to seize opportunities that Americans often fail to take.

"Individuals who immigrate to the U.S. are more likely to be risk-takers, an important trait for people

starting their own businesses. After all, those who summon the will and resources to leave their homeland in favor of starting a new life from scratch aren't exactly playing it safe," Bowles said.

Bowles added, "Additionally, many immigrants are emboldened to start a business after seeing so many of their compatriots succeed with businesses of their own."

At age 19, Ivan Buryadnyk left his family in Ukraine and came to Chicago after a series of tragic events with his family. Buryadnyk, with a background in web design and a strong desire to be his own boss, saw a void in the music industry and wanted an opportunity to use his skills. Inspired by the success of young entrepreneurs in his Loyola University Chicago graduate school classes, Buryadnyk decided just last year that he and his business partner Roman Tykhvskyy would launch ArtistECard, a website where musicians, models and artists can post their photos, bio's and work online as an easy way to promote themselves and land gigs.

"I saw how my fellow classmates were coming up with crazy plans

to start their own businesses and actually making it happen, so when I came up with the concept of an online portfolio application, I saw the opportunity and I ran with it. It was a risk, but one I had to take, and I thank God I took it," said Buryadnyk, 27.

Immigrant entrepreneurs migrate to certain niche markets in which native-born American entrepreneurs struggle to succeed. Beyond putting a lot on the line, business experts attribute immigrant work ethics and strong family ties as major reasons for the success of immigrant-owned businesses.

German immigrant Manfred Unfried, 67, is CEO of Nu-Meat Technology, which operates out of New Jersey and Chicago. Unfried, along with son Erik, 30, provides meat processing machinery to delis and major meat companies across the country and locally here in Chicago. Unfried takes an active role in the operation of his company and says supreme customer service and long hours of work are what ultimately leads to success.

"My son and I like to create bonds with our customers and show them

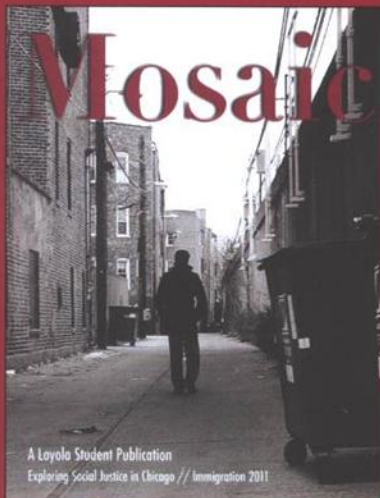
we care because if they aren't happy, they'll go somewhere else. If a machine breaks down in Indiana, we're going to drive out there and fix the problem," Unfried said.

Immigrant entrepreneurs seem to also recognize the needs of their local communities and start businesses that cater to those demands, bolstering their local economies and greatly helping their cities.

Erik Unfried added, "Chicago is known for food. There are delis and hot dog stands all over the place...if these places didn't have machines to cut up their meats, then Chicagoans wouldn't have their lunch, and nobody would be happy. The people need their hot dogs."

Everyone knows starting a business is a costly endeavor, especially during a recession, but the free labor of family members allows many immigrant-run businesses to stay afloat.

"It's not like I'm working at a sweat shop," Unfried laughs, "when it's a family business you want to work as hard as you can to make it a success."



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ONE BIG FAMILY

University organizations help immigrant students assimilate to campus life

By Sasha Attoh

First generation African student Afia Ohemeng had a hard time adjusting to American culture. Growing up in America with immigrant parents was a struggle.

"There are some cultural differences," said the 21-year-old biology major at Loyola University Chicago. "Those differences clashed between some American cultural values and Ghanaian ones."

Ohemeng, co-president of The African Students Alliance, feels that being a member of a student organization helped her feel more at home.

"When I first joined ASA, I was welcomed with such open arms," she said. "The people of the group were genuinely interested in learning about me and where I came from. I also was able to relate to people there who have shared similar experiences."

Cultural groups at Loyola are growing every year, and as the clubs grow, the number of immigrant students, or students with immigrant parents, is increasing. Groups such as the Latin American Students Organization, the Middle Eastern Students Alliance, and the African Students Alliance have been operating at Loyola for many years, and they have had students with an immigrant background joining ever since.

"I'd say every cultural group on campus has students that are at least first generation students if not students who are immigrants themselves," said Benjamin Harris, the Coordinator for Leadership and Program Development in the



ASA members gather during a general meeting. Photo By Sasha Attoh

Department of Student Diversity & Multicultural Affairs at Loyola University Chicago.

The groups may not be aimed at immigrant students, but they are definitely an important part to the students who are members of this group.

"Whether it's ASA, LASO, or MSA, it helps to be around people that can empathize with you," said first generation Ugandan Yvette Ssempijja. "I know students in the other groups who also have immigrant parents, and they feel the same way I do. These clubs are a good thing on campus."

Ohemeng suggested an "obvious reason" why students with an immigrant background join these organizations – to be culturally aware. She stated that though Loyola is diverse enough with regard to ethnic groups, the

problems lie more within cultural awareness.

"There is a lack of that," Ohemeng said. "That is where diversity falls short."

Sandra Vanegas, President of the Graduate Students of Color Alliance, said that diversity is an important part of Loyola's campus and needs to thrive more.

"The more students that join these cultural organizations, the more aware this campus will be," she said. "Organizations like these on campus create a social network where students different backgrounds can discuss, and support one another on the issues people like us face. Being surrounded by a group of people in similar situations makes it easier to fit in."

Harris said that when students who have trouble fitting in come to



ASA members at Taste of Africa. Photo By Sasha Attoh

him for advice, the best suggestion he can give them is to join any of the culturally based organizations on campus.

"These organizations help," Harris said. "I know of some immigrant and first generation students who have had a hard time adjusting at first, but they find that being in a group where others have the same situation gives them solace."

Abimbola 'Lanre' Johnson, 19, a Pre-med, Nigerian-born sophomore at Loyola, personally confided in Harris, beginning college with a slight struggle. After joining the ASA, he felt a real connection with some of the students.

"Even though some people see me as 'Americanized', I enjoy talking to a lot of the students," Johnson said. "There's a different level of connection with a lot of the students and I like it a lot."

Johnson recommends joining groups like ASA.

"Mostly, they're a lot of fun," Johnson said. "Also, you can't have conversations with certain people like you can with people who get

you like they all do. It's always nice to know you're not alone."

Some students with an immigrant background, who have not joined these cultural groups, however do not feel left out in any way.

The problem with some of the American-born students that adapted the American culture rather than their native culture is that they feel they will not fit in to some of these groups.

"I know some students who don't really care," Johnson said. "If they're an immigrant like me who grew up here with some American values, they almost feel like they don't fit in with cultural groups because they feel they're too 'Americanized' or something. I know what it's like, but I still like having the company of the other African students."

Harris insisted that situation should never be a problem.

"I say that students should embrace their cultures," Harris said. "If they feel that they don't need to join the cultural groups, then that's fine. But they shouldn't feel

as if they'll almost be looked down on for growing up with different values."

Though people are joining these clubs mostly based on their culture, Ohemeng suggested that students should join even if the club is not based on their background.

"If a person joins one that is different culturally from theirs, it's a great way to immerse oneself in a new cultural experience that one may not have had," Ohemeng said. "I would recommend it for those who are open-minded and ready to learn."

Ohemeng knew that growing up would most likely be a struggle for her, but she also realized that being in a culturally based group would help her along the way and make her feel at home.

"ASA tries to create a sense of family which helps to facilitate an environment where people are free," Ohemeng said. "That's the most special part about ethnic groups on campus; they make people feel welcome, no matter where they come from."

CORNERSTONE of CULTURE

Chicago's Greektown looks forward to opening of National Hellenic Museum

By LAUREN KESKEY



A digital rendering of the new National Hellenic Museum

Chicago's Greektown has long been known for its tasty baklava and authentic gyros, but not so much for its cultural enrichment. In an attempt to revitalize the area, the National Hellenic Museum will be expanding with the opening of a \$15 million free-standing museum.

"Building a free-standing museum has been a dream of the National Hellenic Museum for a long time," Marketing and Media Relations Director Toni Callas said as she looked the makeshift museum in a fourth floor loft. "It's something we've always been working for."

The National Hellenic Museum in Chicago's West Loop will be moving to its new location in late fall of 2011 after being in a fourth floor loft above the Greek Islands restaurant for about 16 years.

The new 40,000 sq. foot building will be located at 333 S. Halsted St., not far from its current location in historic Greektown.

"The new museum will be fully fitted with environmental control, lighting and all of those sort of state-of-the-art museum standards," said Resident Curator Bethany Fleming, who is ecstatic about the amenities in the new building.

"I think it will be a real cultural center."

Not purely a history museum or an art museum, the National Hellenic Museum's mission is "connecting generations through Greek history, culture and art." The museum will provide visitors with exhibits on Greek history, the Greek immigrant story and the Greek cultural contributions to modern day.

Possibly its largest permanent exhibit is the Frank S. Kameron Oral History Center, centered around an interactive module affectionately nicknamed "Homer."

"The museum was founded

as a museum of immigration—founded to preserve the memories of immigrants that came here—and that’s still a cornerstone of this museum,” Callas explained. “We have approximately 250 oral histories on file.”

Oral History Manager Tom Tzouras notes that there is about a 50-50 split between first-hand accounts from Greek-American immigrants and second-hand accounts from their children and grandchildren. They also try to have a wide range of demographics among these accounts.

“I would say a majority of them are from Chicago, but we also have done studies on people in Colorado, Florida, Washington, D.C. and New York,” Tzouras said.

The Oral History Center puts together a peek into the lives of Greeks in America. There are accounts of everyday people and some from more prominent Greek-Americans, such as Eripides “Rip” Kastaris, two-time official artist for the United States Olympic Committee. Kastaris considers it a privilege to be part of the Greek heritage.

“I like to say that to be Greek is to be able to laugh and dance and drink—to have a release as well as to pray,” he notes in his oral history.

Another prominent Greek-American whose story can be found in the archives is bestselling author Nicholas Gage. He tells the story of his family’s escape from a Communist-occupied Greek village, which he chronicled in the bestselling novel *Eleni*. His mother had to stay behind, but insisted the



Vivian Haritos presents a show to students at the museum. Photos courtesy of the National Hellenic Museum

rest of her family leave.

“After our escape they arrested my mother, tortured her and executed her,” Gage explains in his immigration account for the Oral History Center.

More of the everyday Greek-Americans with oral histories in the museum’s archives comment on the importance of religion and community in their transitions to American culture. “We had a great community, a Greek community,” said Marianna Raftopoulos, a second-generation Greek-American from Grand Junction, Colo. “It was centered around our Greek Orthodox Church, our religion, our culture and our tradition.”

Vivian Haritos, the director of education and programming at the National Hellenic Museum, recounted the story of U.S. Congressman John Sarbanes whose family immigrated to the United States over 100 years ago.

“It’s just an example of what can happen in the course of 100 years,” Haritos said. “I think that story is really unique to the U.S. because

you come here and people always say it’s the land of opportunity. Nowadays that message is a little diluted, but back in the day people could come here, work hard, send their children to school and eventually see them become senators and congressmen.”

Those working at the museum are not the only ones who see the importance of knowing the immigrant story.

“I think it’s very important to hear those stories,” said Athena Manolakos, 29-year-old daughter of the Pan Hellenic Pastry Shop owner. “My dad’s stories of immigrating are really great. I mean it’s good to know where you come from and how difficult it was for them”

Tom Tzouras couldn’t agree more.

“It’s important no matter who you are, whether you like history or you like journalism or you like science. You’re defined by the people who came before you,” Tzouras said.

“If you like it or you don’t like it, it’s who you are. Documenting these stories is basically having an identity of where we came from.”

Heart of the Community

Neighborhood center helps immigrants settle

By Marissa Heyblom

Rosa Sinchi decided to immigrate from Ecuador to the United States in 1979 in hopes of a brighter future for her and her family. She was finally able to reunite with her husband who made his own journey five years earlier. When Sinchi finally encountered her new country, she learned how imperative it was to learn English in order to survive.

"It's very, very necessary to learn English. Now, I have a store. In that place, it's very important because customers are American and speak English. I need to speak English," Sinchi said.

Sinchi now resides in Chicago's Albany Park. She owns and operates a florist shop, that opened in 1999, called Nuevo Amanecer Flowers. Like many other immigrants, Sinchi understands the importance of learning English and that's why she has taken classes for the past few years at the Albany Park Community Center.

Located in the third most diverse neighborhood of the United States, the Albany Park Community Center is a non-profit organization that offers programs and services for the community. English as a second language, otherwise known as ESL, is offered at the community center and these classes are popular among immigrants.

Jana Prvulovic is the Adult Education Program Coordinator at Albany Park Community Center and taught English as a foreign language in Serbia before

immigrating to the United States herself.

"I immigrated here four years ago, and I didn't plan to, but actually my brother-in-law applied me for an online lottery for the green card. I was not familiar with that and then I just won it so my husband and I moved here," Prvulovic said.

Saturdays. Usually we have between 1,200 to 1,400 students a year...we have levels one through four which go through beginning to high intermediate for the advanced," Prvulovic said.

Fernando Elgueta immigrated to the United States eight years ago from Chile and is currently living in Albany Park. He is in a level three ESL class at the Albany Park Community Center.

"I want more opportunities... something different, you know? I live in Albany Park and when you are here it's necessary to talk to different people. If you know more English, you can find something better," Elgueta said.

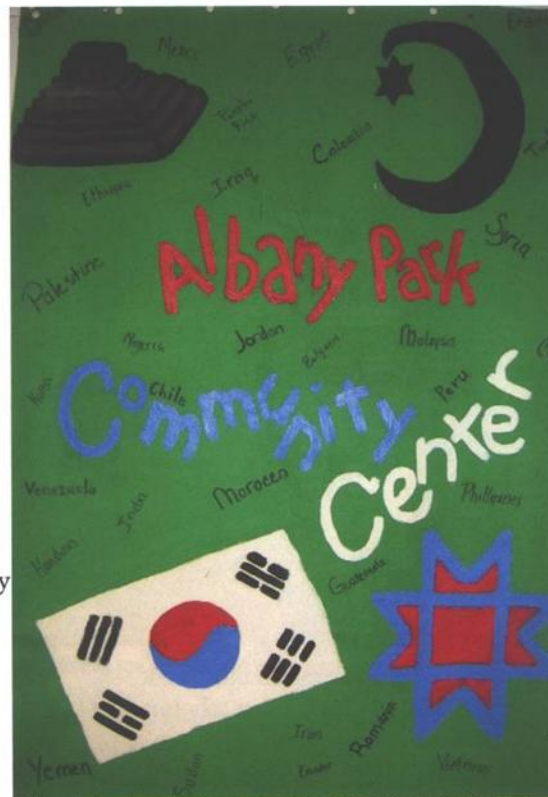
Elgueta works at a construction company, but he is learning English for better job opportunities. One of his classmates, Carlos Gonzalez, is also looking to change his occupation.

"In my country, Guatemala, it's been difficult. It's expensive. I like it in the United States. I like to work here in the United States. My family is here and we are all citizens. I need to speak more English for my job because my job is only with American people. Sometimes my boss understands me and sometimes he does not. My

boss is very angry...I worry for my job," Gonzalez said.

Gonzalez believes the classes have helped him improve his English speaking. His teacher, Uriah Quaites, understands the intense demand to learn English.

"I think it will be more in the



ESL students artwork representing where they are from at Albany Park Community Center. Photo by Marissa Heyblom

Prvulovic started out at the community center as a substitute teacher and was eventually offered her own ESL class. Now, she is the program coordinator and teaches evening ESL classes.

"We have classes in the morning, in the afternoon, evenings, and on

future especially if the immigration reform goes through, because one of the things they keep talking about is in order to become a citizen, you have to know English," Quaites said. "There are a lot of undocumented immigrants who can't become citizens now who if they get the opportunity they say, 'Oh wow, I have to learn English' so there might be like a flood in the future. But, there's definitely demand and supply."

Nasly Narvaez, who is from Columbia, is another one of Quaites' students. Narvaez came to the United States three years ago to be with her family in Albany Park and is in the process of learning English for better communication purposes. Narvaez is currently unemployed.

"I speak English very few, but I'm writing more. It's important to learn English. To communicate,"



Uriah Quaites teaches a group of level three ESL students at the Albany Park Community Center. *Photo by Marissa Heyblom*

Narvaez said.

Once students have completed ESL levels one through four at the Albany Park Community Center, they are referred to Truman College and Wright College. Students

are also able to take the Workforce class, which focuses on job skills and finding a job.

"We have quite a few students who have found a job through us. They were helped to find a job and they were set in English," Prvulovic said.

Albany Park happens to be multi-ethnic port of entry for new immigrants of many nationalities. The Albany Park Community Center's clients reflect this diversity. In 2004, the population it served was 58 percent Latino, 15 percent Asian, 4 percent African-American, 14 percent Caucasian, 8 percent other, and less than 1 percent Native American. According to the 2000 Census, more than 26,000 adults in Albany Park are foreign-born, and at least 11,000 adults in the community speak little or no English.

"Last year, we had students coming in from 66 countries to learn English...and that's nice," Prvulovic said.

In the news:

NEW SOCIAL NETWORKING SITE REUNITES MISSING REFUGEES

By Marissa Heyblom

Refugees United is a new social networking site with a mission unlike any other. Its purpose is to help reunite refugees who have been displaced by war, persecution or natural disasters with just one click of the mouse.

The non-profit organization was started by Danish brothers, David and Christopher Mikkelsen. David Mikkelsen said the idea came to him when he was trying to help an Afghani refugee find his family.

"While doing so, my brother and I realized this possibility of an online tracing tool where you could go in, do a profile, giving out information that you're only comfortable with," he said.

Anyone can make a profile on Refugees United and begin searching for their lost love ones but, because many refugees don't have the privilege of accessing the Internet or, for that matter, a computer, Refugees United has placed computer terminals in places where a large number of refugees live.

The number of people using the site continues to grow, and the organization hopes to get 25,000 refugees in its database by the end of 2011. *The Refugees United Web site is Refunite.org.*

IT'S COOLER BY THE LAKE.

The Office of First Year Experience



Preparing people to lead extraordinary lives

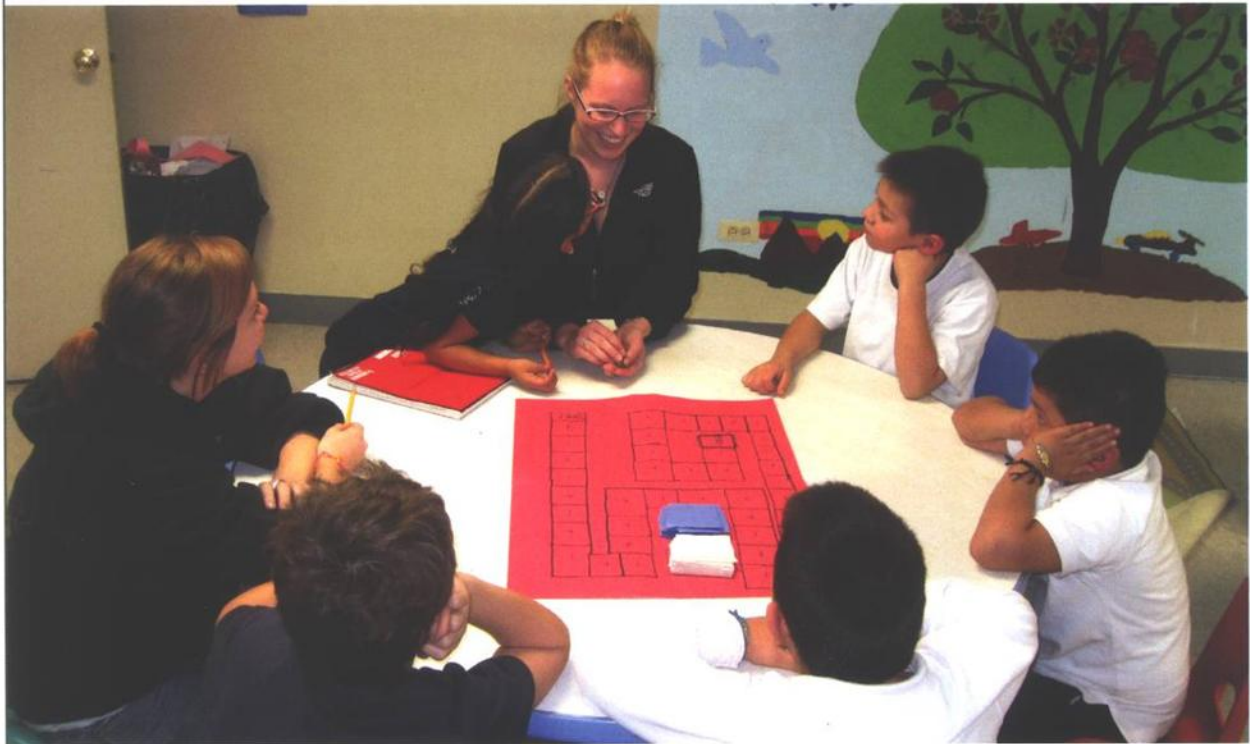
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LOYOLA COMMUNITY
LITERACY CENTER

DIVERSITY on DISPLAY

After-school program caters to diverse student body By RACHEL CHRISTENSEN



Two tutors play a game and share a laugh with 2nd grade boys. Photos by Rachel Christensen

It's 4p.m. in the basement of the Hamdard Center. Moments ago, the small sprawl of linoleum classrooms was silent. Now 35 students are rushing down the narrow staircase, still excited from the short time they spent on the playground down the street.

Young voices speaking at least three different languages echo off the concrete walls. Jocelyn Broit comes down the stairs behind them and the chaos only lasts a minute longer as the students scoop their backpacks off the floor and

make their way to their respective classrooms.

Broit is the Youth Program Director at the Hamdard Center for Health and Human Services. Thirty five children, many of whom have immigrated from countries all around the world, come to the center on Devon Avenue in Chicago's Rogers Park four days a week after school. According to Broit, however, it's more than a tutoring program

"I see our program as a mode of advocacy for these kids, to make

sure that if anything happens that everything is being communicated," she said.

The students involved in the program are as diverse as the city of Chicago. Their parents, and in some cases they themselves, have immigrated here from Mexico, Honduras, Nigeria, Bosnia, Poland, and countries in the Middle East. The Hamdard Center's youth program offers students help that they can't get from their parents and educates parents on the American education system.



From left: Program Director Jocelyn Broit and 2nd grade girl by the book rack; A student draws on the chalkboard wall

"It's helpful," said Rosa Zunicea, the mother of an 11-year-old boy involved in the after school program. Zunicea believes the youth program deserves some of the credit for her son's success in school, "It helps with homework a lot, a lot," she said.

Broit explains that language barriers are a big issue for parents.

"It's more difficult to advocate for your child. It's also that they're not familiar with the system, the system of public schools," she said.

Broit and the other tutors make homework the first priority. Students' homework is in English and a lot of times their parents are unable to help them if they have questions.

Hamdard's youth program also holds workshops for academic enrichment. These are called Social/Emotional Workshops. One day the youngest students trace their hands on a blank piece of paper.

Then they are instructed to write or draw what hands are meant to be used for. An 8 year old draws a ball. In the rest of the blank space, outside the hands, students write what hands are not meant for. Broit holds up her example which reads, "Touching Others. Others Touching You."

The workshops give children the opportunity to speak out about what causes them stress.

"And things have [happened] and that's been the place it comes out," Broit said. Hamdard also offers mental health services for kids. Upstairs is a counselor's office where children can have a weekly appointment, especially if youth center staff recommends it.

Visitors walking around the basement soon discover why the youth program has a maximum capacity of 35 students. Chairs and tables are sparse and a hallway is used as one of the study rooms.

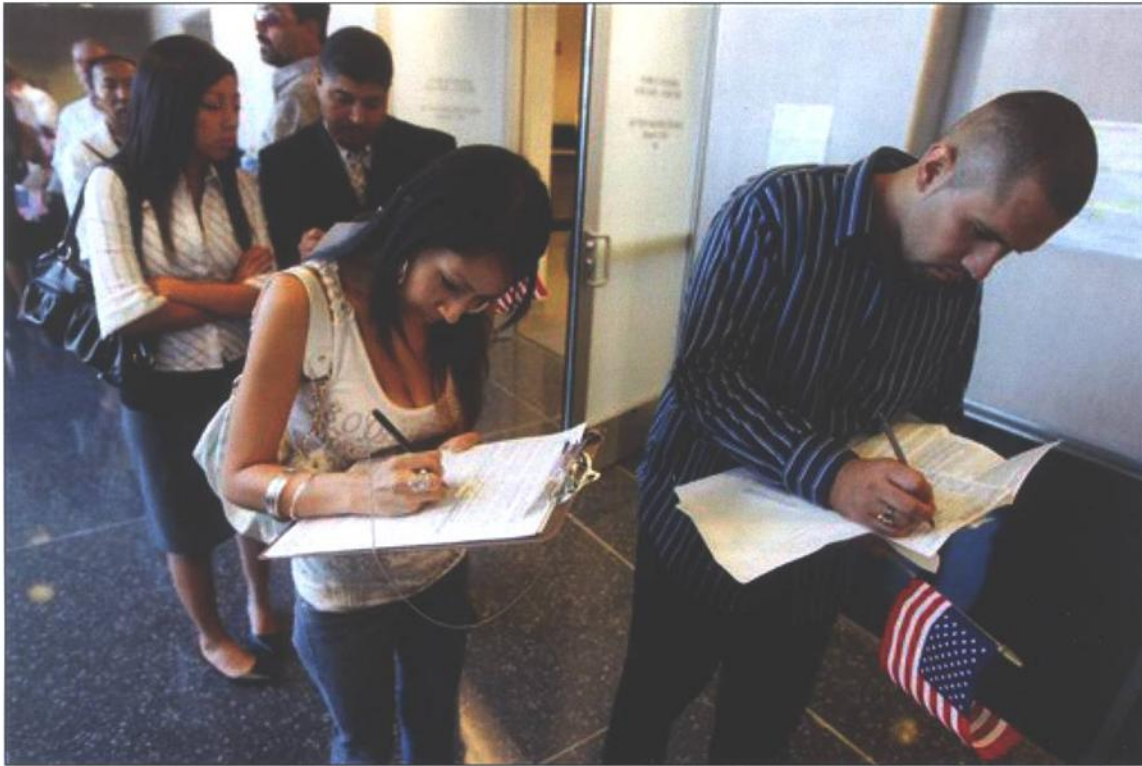
"We've got 50 more kids on the waiting list" says tutor Melissa Roldan, 21, as she supervises the 1st and 2nd graders as they work on homework.

The program is funded by the Chicago Department of Family and Support Services but a lot of supplies are donated. The "prize room," a closet in the basement office, is designated for Borders Bookstore donations alone. Students get to pick from the stacks of books and games on the floor if they're chosen as "Star of the Week."

"I really think it's important," Broit said of the program, "It's a place outside their school and outside their family where they feel like they belong, that they feel like they have people who support them, that they can explore new things about themselves... for me that's what's most important and I feel like we've done it."

Voting for a Voice

Immigrants seek power through the polls *By Mariann Devlin*



New United States citizens Jenette Chavez, 18, and Josue Cano, 20, fill out forms as they register to vote. AP Photo

The daughter of Mexican immigrants, Maria Guzman has worked with DREAM Act students, volunteered for Barack Obama's 2008 presidential campaign, and believes strongly in the power of voting.

"I know the importance of what voting means," Guzman, 31, said. "Some people I run into are like, 'My vote doesn't really matter.' I think it speaks to the need for you to do your civic duty."

Although Guzman, 31, understands the complexity of the immigration issue as a whole, she believes it's the biggest reason why many Latinos vote.

"I have a lot of family, that's the reason they go out to be polls,"

Guzman said. "I would say that it's probably the strongest factor."

Indeed, a Pew Hispanic Center study conducted in August suggests that Latinos who have discussed the immigration issue are more motivated to head to the polls. Nearly six in 10 Latino registered voters said they were certain they would vote in the November 2010 elections, as opposed to only 39 percent who have not talked about it.

This isn't surprising to Chicago mayoral candidate Wilfredo De Jesus.

"Absolutely, that brings people to the polls," De Jesus, a reverend at New Life Covenant Ministries and an advocate for immigration

reform, said. "That's why Barack Obama got voted in. He said in his first year he wanted to tackle the issue of comprehensive immigration reform."

"People with less resources, education, and income are less likely to turn out and vote," said Victoria DeFrancesco Soto, an assistant professor of political science at Northwestern University. "Latinos, by and large, tend to fall into lower socioeconomic classes."

Language also appears to be a barrier. The survey found that only 38 percent of Latino voters who primarily speak Spanish say they are certain they will vote.

De Jesus agreed that the voting process can be "intimidating" for



Immigrants believe they can secure more rights through the political process. AP Photo

people whose first language is Spanish, especially older Latinos.

"You find those people not coming out at all because they know there are certain places that aren't language friendly," De Jesus said. "We need to do better, not just for Hispanics but other ethnicities in our country."

De Jesus said that he has encouraged "marginalized and disenfranchised" Latinos to vote. "(They think) that only the 'haves' can run for office, so I'm trying to mobilize those who 'have not.'"

Seemi Choudry, an organizer for the Illinois Coalition For Immigrant and Refugee Rights (ICIRR)'s One Nation, One Dream: VOTE campaign, says these concerns have been taken into account.

One of the campaign's main goals was to register immigrant voters.

"Whether it's where to register to vote, whether it's voter education or voter awareness, everything (we contribute) is both in English and in Spanish," Choudry said. "We

make sure that language is not a barrier in our mobilization efforts."

Rep. Luis Gutierrez (D-Ill.), who has decided not to run for mayor of Chicago in order to focus on passing comprehensive immigration reform in Congress, said that to win the Latino vote Democrats will have to be more than just "not Republicans."

"They have to be seen taking a stand and fighting back against attacks on the Latino community," Gutierrez said. "These attacks are increasing, certainly in terms of political rhetoric on immigration, language, and culture, but also in a physical sense as violent attacks on immigrant and Latino voters."

DeFrancesco Soto thinks there is hope that Republicans and Democrats will find common ground on the issue of immigration.

"I think once we get past the election and the buzz of the Tea Party...we're going to see Republicans maybe a little bit more open to negotiation," DeFrancesco

Soto said. "Once that happens, the Democrats might feel...more open to coming to the middle and say, 'Ok, we may not be able to get comprehensive immigration reform, but let's start with the DREAM Act.'"

Comprehensive immigration reform would also require the support of other groups too.

"You can't forward a policy if the main target of that policy is not invested in it...you also have to get white and black support for it," DeFrancesco said.

Gutierrez, after campaigning for immigration reform across the country, said that Democrats are not the only ones who seem to support the "hopes and aspirations" of Latinos and immigrants.

De Jesus is optimistic about voters' ability to initiate comprehensive reform.

"If we as Hispanics get together, across the nation, and galvanize, boy it'll resonate," De Jesus said. "It'll hit the White House."

CENTER OF ATTENTION

Centro Romero offers children safe haven for learning
in Chicago's Edgewater neighborhood

By Leigh Burmesch

Catarina De Araujo sits in her Centro Romero office, adorned with beautiful student made artwork, and recalls a program this past summer, "What's Under the Hood," in which Centro Romero students learned how to change a car's oil and tires.

These lessons were put into practice when De Araujo later got a flat tire. Luckily for De Araujo, two of her students eagerly volunteered to change the flat.

Centro Romero is a community-based organization located in the Edgewater neighborhood of Chicago. It has been serving the area refugee immigrant population for the past 12 years.

Offering programs such as youth learning and leadership development, Centro Romero strives to provide Latino immigrants the necessary tools in achieving success in American society.

One of these programs is Centro Romero's after school tutoring program, which first served the children of the women in Centro Romero's Domestic Violence Program. Today the program has grown to serve more than 50 students in grades 1-8, with 100 more students on the waiting list.

"We don't ever advertise because the waiting list is already too big," De Araujo said.

Centro Romero relies heavily on help from volunteers. Doris Andrade, 48, originally from Chiclayo, Peru, started out at Centro Romero almost 12 years ago as a volunteer. Today Andrade is the Youth Coordinator.

"We try to recruit volunteers to help the kids achieve success in

school. This is our main concern," Andrade said.

Case in point: Nick Wojciak. Wojciak, 21, a student at Loyola University Chicago, started at Centro Romero as a tutor his freshmen year. Now, as a senior, Wojciak is back, this time as a Legal Aid.

For Wojciak, tutoring gave him the chance to get off campus.

"It was out of this bubble that



Erica Cuevas, 11 concentrates on her homework after school at Centro Romero. Photo by Leigh Burmesch

Loyola can sometimes be," Wojciak said.

Centro Romero strives to create a community, "We try to engage volunteers to the program," Andrade said.

Jocelyn Corroa, 9, lit up when discussing Centro Romero's volunteers.

"Our youth workers and us have a really great connection. We have a lot of great times," she said.

Erica Cuevas, 11, spoke fondly of a favorite volunteer.

"She helped me a lot. She was good at math," she said. "Actually, she was good at all the subjects."

Andrade says her ultimate reward is seeing improvement from the

students.

"We see when they came to Centro without knowing how to read and then leave Centro Romero with one of the best scores in reading," she said.

Most students have been at Centro Romero since first grade.

"It takes a lot longer than a year, because the student's first language is Spanish," Andrade said.

The biggest challenge De Araujo said, is keeping the students

interested. Not all Centro Romero's students realize the special opportunity they have been given.

"The young ones always seem very interested," De Araujo said.

However once they hit middle school she starts hearing, "I don't want to be here." Or, "My mom is making me." De Araujo believes most kids won't realize Centro Romero's impact until they leave.

De Araujo, recalled one of Centro Romero's most beloved students, Elisa Luvianos, 14, who attended Centro Romero for eight years.

Luvianos, who applied to 16 area high schools, was accepted into every one.

De Araujo said Luvianos, like most of Centro Romero's students, was forced to grow up quickly.

"The kid is the parent," De Araujo said. Many of the parents are not confident English speakers, relying a great deal on their children to translate.

Despite the major responsibilities that have been put on Luvianos' shoulders, De Araujo said Luvianos has ambitions of being a lawyer.

"When she opens her mouth," De Araujo said, "I am amazed. She was like the dream girl of Centro Romero."

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