

CARECEN Notes

May 2006

a newsletter of the Central American Resource Center of Los Angeles

Vol. 23, No. 2

Transnational Migrants Redefining Social and Cultural Paradigms

The recent marches demonstrated that millions of people in hundreds of communities across the US care deeply about how host countries integrate immigrants into the social fabric.

Yet, the discussion has typically remained so US-centric that few have taken the opportunity to examine the ways in which migration has become a world-wide phenomenon. Equally important is how this wave of individuals moving in to developed countries affects economies, cultures and families world-wide.

The World Bank estimates that workers in developed countries sent \$250 billion to home countries in 2005. According to Dilip Ratha, a senior World Bank economist, quoted in the Los Angeles Times, "Close to a billion people, one in every six on Earth, may receive some support from this lifeline."

The April 6, 2006 article went on to state that "At least 39 billion flowed out of the US last year, wired home by legal and unauthorized workers. . . . Mexico's annual remittance inflow has doubled since 2002 and reached 20 billion last year, second only to petroleum as a generator of wealth for the country. Brazilian laborers in Japan send home more than \$2 billion a year, out-earning their country's coffee exports. India received \$21.7 billion and China \$21.3 billion last year from its workers abroad. In Jordan, Lesotho, Nicaragua, Tonga and Tajikistan, immigrant workers provide more than a quarter of the gross national product. . . . Remittance income is growing fastest in Eastern Europe, a trend that quickened as



Millions of supporters of immigrant rights surround City Hall during a historic march in Downtown Los Angeles on March 25, 2006

What Sensenbrenner Might Not Have Expected

Mass mobilizations drew millions of immigrant families and their allies to the streets of Los Angeles on March 25th, April 10th and May 1st, 2006 to protest the proposed criminalization of hard working, undocumented individuals purely for political expediency.

The mass mobilizations of immigrants and their allies over the past few months are breaking new ground in a long struggle for civil and human rights. Yet many English-speaking media outlets have missed the mark in understanding how these historic events have transpired by attributing the bulk of the organizing efforts to only one or two individuals or organizations.

Shocked by Congress's passing of H.R.4437 last December, religious, academic, community, labor, and student groups as well as many members of the

community began to meet to develop strategies to defeat the House approved immigration legislation. At an emergency meeting in Riverside on February 11, 2006, it was unanimously voted that there would be a march to oppose Sensenbrenner's bill on March 25th in Downtown Los Angeles. Out of the conference and the La Placita Pro-Immigrant Working Group, the March 25th Coalition was born. The coalition voted on strategies through consensus, building on one of the key strengths of the coalition: its diversity.

Believing that the organizing efforts were pulled off by one or two people is naïve. Latin America has a strong tradition of movements that are built from the ground up and which involve mass amounts of people. It is not only part of the history but part of the culture of many of the countries that lay south of the U.S.-Mexico border.

From the Executive Director:

Dear Friends,

During the last three months we have seen unprecedented mass mobilizations of immigrants and their allies. Immigrants are writing a new chapter in the history of civil and human rights movements in the United States.

CARECEN has been at the heart of organizing the March 25, April 10 and the May 1, mobilizations – people who have participated in marches, rallies, student walk outs, boycotts, vigils, fasts, religious activities and teach-ins. They have sent thousands of letters, post cards and made hundreds of phone calls to their Congressional representatives.

Typical activists on the streets are families like Felipe and Claudia and their two children Cesar and Thania Gomez who arrived in the United States from Mexico 15 years ago, or Evelyn who arrived



from El Salvador 8 years ago, and Jorge, a high school youth born in L.A. Local families played the leading role in the organizing for the marches: they organized their co-workers, neighbors and friends, distributed fliers and placed posters in local businesses. Thousands of families – from the baby in a stroller to a grandmother with a cane – marched with dignity, calling for just, humane and fair immigration reform.

In the short term we must ensure that the actions positively impact the outcome of immigration reform legislation. In the long term, immigrants must turn their marches into concrete political power so that no politician would dare attempt to criminalize immigrants and their allies ever again.

We March Today, We Vote Tomorrow!
Si Se Puede!

Angela Sanbrano

CARECEN Notes is a publication of the Central American Resource Center of Los Angeles. CARECEN Notes is also available in Spanish.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Hector Aquiles Magaña, Chair
UCLA

Martha Arévalo, Vice-Chair
Arévalo PR

Gloria Annicchiarico, Secretary
Department of Water & Power

Raul E. Godínez, Esq., Treasurer
Law Offices of Raul E. Godínez

Omar V. Corletto, At Large
Al Frente Por Santa Elena

Cecilia Bográn
Univision 34 & Telefuturo 46

Douglas Carranza Mena, Ph.D.
Cal State University, Northridge

Fernando de Necochea
Southern California Edison

John R. Guerra
The Gas Company, A Semptra Company

Linton Joaquin, Esq.
National Immigration Law Center

Susan Lefebvre, Esq.

Glenda Martinez, Esq.
Univision Communications, Inc.

Douglas E. Mirell, Esq.
Loeb & Loeb, LLP

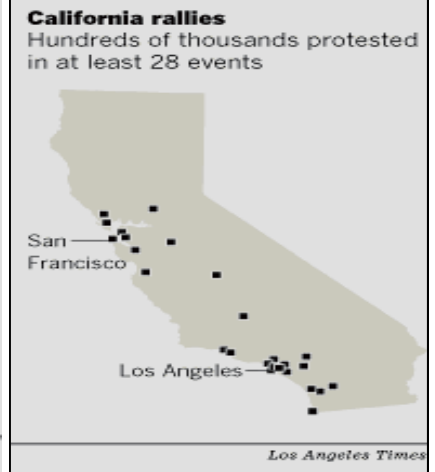
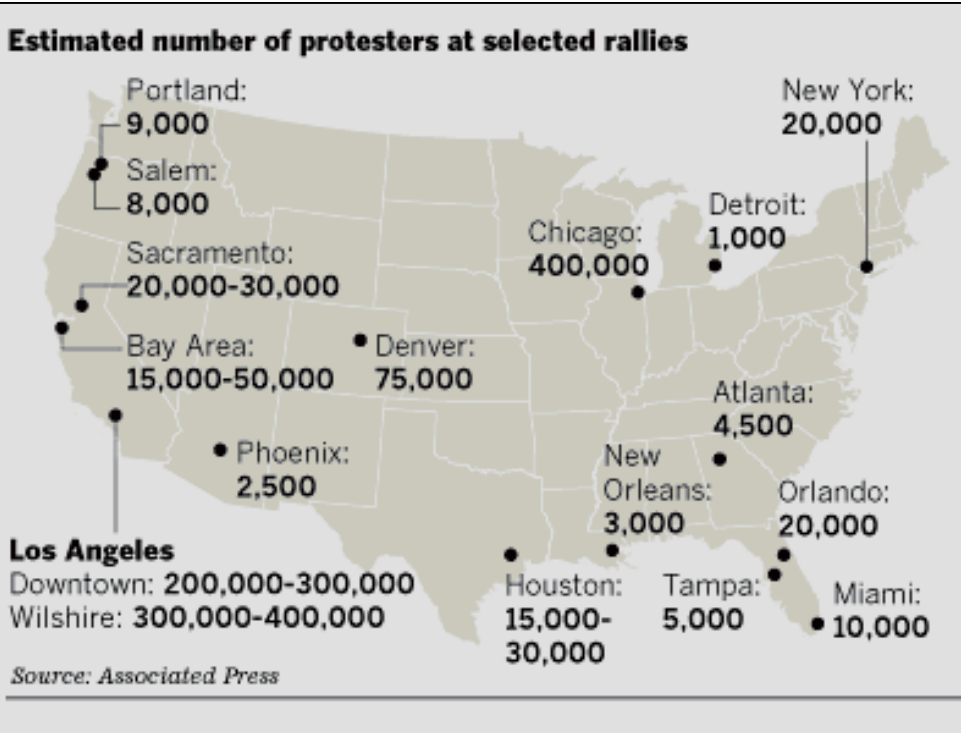
Steve Nutter, Esq.
Reich, Adell, Crost & Critan

Angela Sanbrano
Executive Director

Affiliations listed for identification only

CARECEN Notes is edited by Stephanie Kotin

MAY 1, 2006: Nationwide Day of Actions



Dr. William Pleitez to speak at annual benefit for CARECEN

"Migrants transcend national borders and their identities are not set in advance as the exclusive product of the values that traditionally define being Salvadoran. . . In short, migration has helped make El Salvador a new country that is still not fully aware of itself. . . . A basic feature of this new country is that its main reference point is now its populations, rather than its territory.

Human Development Report for El Salvador, 2005

A Look at the New Us:
The Impact of Migration
UN Development Programme,
William Pleitez, Coordinator

CARECEN is honored to feature Dr. William Pleitez, coordinator the above cited study, at the May 18 annual benefit event held at the Biltmore Hotel, Los Angeles. Dr. Pleitez will present a short summary of one of the first attempts by Salvadoran intellectuals to examine the impact of the 20% of El Salvador's population that lives outside the country has on Salvadoran economies, families and culture.

According to the report, "The human development concept stemmed precisely from the realization that despite decades of strong economic growth, poverty levels (sometimes extreme) around the world had not been reduced significantly. The human development concept seeks to assess economic development not in monetary terms per se, but rather in terms of options, opportunities, and well-being for participants in development, i.e. people in a given location. It argues that the purpose of an economic system should be to manage human potential, and that the main wealth of a country resides in its people, who are key to improving the present and building the future."

"Migrants are inducing cultural changes that are not just a by-product of economic transformations, but rather a fundamental component of the society currently being built. . . They are an axis around which we must rethink all other identities. Migration is an engine for cul-



Dr. Pleitez will speak at CARECEN's Reception on May 18, 2006

tural change that provides new opportunities for human development."

William Pleitez, PhD.,

Mr. Pleitez is the senior economist at United Nations Development Programme in San Salvador and served as Coordinator of the Human Development Report of El Salvador. He is also Director of the microfinance enterprise INTEGRAL, Director of Fundación Salvadoreña de Apoyo Integral (FUSAI) and member of the Consultative Council of CONCULTURA. After being awarded his B.A degree in Economics from the Universidad Centroamericana José Simeón Cañas, San Salvador, Pleitez moved to France. He received his master's degree in Growth and Development from the University Aix-Marseille II and his doctorate in Economics from the Université Paris 8.

Returning to El Salvador, Pleitez served as president of the Economist Association of El Salvador and was nominated for the Economist of the year and Distinguished Economist awards from the association. Throughout his professional life he has served as Professor, Universidad Centroamericana "José Simeón Cañas" and Universidad Tecnológica, Director of the Economy and Social Advisory Group of the Missing, Ministry of Planning, Director of Economic and Social Research of the Centro de Investigaciones Tecnológicas y Científicas (CENITEC) and Advisor of the economic and agricultural Ministries, Director of Trade Policy, Director of the Superintendent of the Financial System and Advisor of several enterprises and associations. He is the author of several articles in

Transnational Families

Migrants, from Page 1

Britain and Ireland eased curbs on the entry of migrant laborers from the 10 countries embraced in the European Union's eastward expansion in 2004."

CARECEN's concern about the separation of families wrought by antiquated immigration legislation is expanded by "A look at the new us; the impact of migration," published by the United Nations Development Programme in El Salvador, where family impact is finally being studied.

"Their children who still live in El Salvador achieve higher education, live in better houses, and if prospects in the country are not bright enough, they can always follow their parents' example."

"Many consequences are negative: parents and children separated, a heavier domestic burden falling on some family members, lack of emotional support, hindered emotional and physical development for the youngest, families rebuilt with relatives of both spouses, and more."

Movement Built From The Family Up— A grassroots movement in 2006

Sensenbrenner, from page 1

The We Are America Coalition (many of whose members were instrumental in the March 25th march, and which formed after that march) has— consciously or not— absorbed some of this *sabor* into its mode of operation. It has deliberately chosen to showcase the stories of immigrants, families, students and workers through speeches at rallies on April 10th and May 1st, and at multiple press conferences.

The civic action campaign launched on May 9th by the Coalition aims to engage the millions who marched and millions more with the political process that is determining the future of their lives. Perhaps this gusto for connecting to politics through civic action, a gusto that seems to be lacking in many U.S.-born citizens will be one more contribution that immigrants have made to this country.



2845 West Seventh Street, Los Angeles, CA 90005

Phone: (213) 385-7800
Fax: (213) 385-1094
www.carecen-la.org

Postage

CARECEN's G.O.T.V. Efforts In-Sync with We Are America Coalition's Campaign: Today we March, Tomorrow We Vote

"Hoy marchamos, mañana votamos."

Today we march, tomorrow we vote. This was the final chant that a crowd of unprecedented size and strength sang as they left the intersection of Wilshire Boulevard and La Brea Avenue on May 1st, 2006. On International Workers' Day, over a million people marched from MacArthur Park to the Miracle Mile sign in the mid-Wilshire district of Los Angeles. Immigrant families, workers and human rights supporters stretched from the Miracle Mile sign to the 110 freeway, (a distance of approximately five miles), closing Wilshire Blvd., one of Los Angeles' most vital east-west arteries and commercial thoroughfares, for most of the day.

At the same time as the immigrant community and its allies have been mobilizing for marches and actions throughout Los Angeles, CARECEN has kicked off its third Get-Out-the-Vote and Voter Education campaign. Just days after the March 25th march and rally in downtown Los Angeles drew a momentous crowd of over a million people, CARECEN's Civic Participation voter program took to the streets as well.

Four-days-a-week, dedicated community members volunteer their time and energy to educate fellow members of their community of the importance of voting in this year's elections. The volunteers phone bank at the center and go out into the area's precinct to pound the pavement-connecting with the community, one phone call, and one door knock at a time.

Each time volunteers contact a person, they not only distribute non-partisan voter information and convey how essential it is for that person to get out to vote, but they also discuss with each person what he or she believes are the most important issues in the community.

While many people begin by talking about the recent actions in Los Angeles in support of immigration reform, almost all go on to select issues such as education, jobs, safety and neighborhood improvement as those which are of their most immediate concern. In other words, gaining legal status is only one piece of the puzzle to improving the quality of life for many immigrant families.

"When we vote, we have an opportunity to change the things that we do not like in our community. Residents may be boycotting and marching, but it is crucial now to show that they have political power as a community by going out to vote," says Victoria Lopez who recently joined CARECEN's Civic Participation Program directed by Sergio Barahona. Everyone with whom volunteers come into contact is invited to forums held at CARECEN to learn more about issues that face the community



CARECEN youth and parents march up Broadway Avenue in Downtown Los Angeles on March 25th, 2006. Many families who have been active with CARECEN for years

and specific propositions appearing on the ballot in the June and November elections.

On May 20th, CARECEN will hold its next forum to make sure voters are prepared before they go to the polls for the June 6th primary elections. The forum is co-sponsored by La Opinion, NALEO and CARECEN, and will run from 9 am to 11 am.

To attend the forum, or to volunteer with CARECEN's Voter Education Campaign, please contact Sergio Barahona at (213) 385-7800 ext. 131 or Victoria Lopez at ext. 159.