



New York Cultural Center

Waking up from the American Dream: A Conversation about Immigration Reform

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*transcript not reviewed by the speakers

Simmonds: Good evening, and welcome on behalf of Crossroads New York Cultural Center. I would like to thank the Catholic Migration Office of the Diocese of Brooklyn, Saint Francis College and the law firm of Epstein Becker & Green for their help and support in promoting and organizing this conversation. Tonight's debate on immigration reform, which has been preceded by a workshop on current developments in immigration law, is part of Crossroads' ongoing "Current Events" series.

As you all know, here in the US there has been a lively debate about immigration legislation during the past few years. However, the importance of immigration really goes well beyond the current debate in Washington. First of all, massive international migration has been one of the great historical developments of the last quarter of a century, all over the world. It is safe to say that the resettlement of millions of people from the less developed parts of the world into the richer countries is going to be one of the defining issues of world history in our lifetime. Secondly, immigration is almost unique among other policy issues because of the way in which it has to do with real, concrete people. The question is not how we face immigration, but how we face immigrants, real human beings with needs, talents and expectations. This is why all ideological approaches are especially inadequate in dealing with this problem. On the one hand, neither abstract legalism nor nativism are adequate responses to the question posed by the presence of immigrants. On the other hand, a naive, universalistic openness to immigration also is not enough. What one must recognize is that the integration of immigrants does require work on the part of the host country (especially in education), and it challenges us to recognize and value better our own tradition and identity. This necessity to go beyond the constraints of ideology is one reason why

religious institutions such as the Catholic Church have a long tradition of being at the forefront of the effort to welcome and help immigrants. Understanding and elucidating a correct Catholic judgment on immigration is also one of the goals of tonight's discussion.

I now leave the introductions to our moderator, Dr. Jaskiran K. Mathur. Dr. Mathur is a Sociologist from India with varied experience in Culture, Gender Issues and Development. She has been in the US since August of 1998 and has since worked as a Consultant to the World Bank at its office in the United Nations and as Consultant to UNESCO at its Liaison office at the United Nations in New York. She has also worked as the Domestic Violence Program Coordinator of the New York not for profit organization SAKHI for South Asian Women. She continues to volunteer for SAKHI and has served a three-year term on the SAKHI Board of Directors. Dr. Mathur is an Associate Professor of Sociology here at St. Francis College where she has been teaching full time since 1999. It is our pleasure to welcome her here tonight.

Mathur: Thank you, Rita, and welcome everybody to St. Francis College, home for me. Should I say home away from home because I am a sociology professor and, as I come from another country, I feel it's always interesting that I bring a perspective, knowingly or unknowingly, into my lectures, and I hope that some of that will come out in our discussions later on.

Being the sociologist on the panel, I was charged with providing a context for our discussion this evening because that's what we discuss in class. I teach a course on migrations; I teach a course on minority groups; So I thought I could give a little bit of background and some statistics.

To examine immigration fears and concerns we need to know that the extent to which other countries begin, continue, or cease to send large numbers of immigrants helps determine the impact of these immigrants on US society. As different parts of the world become primary sending areas, US foreign policy becomes increasingly involved in developments in those parts of the world. The past dominance of countries from Europe (with the exception of Mexico) amongst the leading suppliers of immigrants has shifted since immigration law changed in 1965. Many still come from European countries but they now account for less than 18 percent of the overall number annually, due to the large increase in Asian and Hispanic immigrants. Chain migration, family reunification and the sharp contrast between the birth rates in Europe as opposed to Asia and Latin America, the continued dominance of developing nations in sending new strangers to these shores is almost inevitable.

Including the undocumented aliens who were subsequently granted amnesty about 9.1 million legal immigrants came to the United States between 1991- 2000, exceeding the previous record set in the decade 1901- 1910 which was 8.8 million. The five leading Suppliers of immigrants to the US 1820- 2002 were Germany, Mexico, Italy, United Kingdom and Ireland. The comparison between the first five sources of newcomers for 1965 [Canada (38,327), Mexico (37,969), United Kingdom (27,358), Germany (24,045) and Cuba (19,760)], and for 2002 [Mexico (219,380), India (71,105), China, People's Republic (61,282), Philippines (51,308), and Vietnam (33,627)]

Some of the opposition to current immigration results from concern about the ability of the United States to absorb so many immigrants. Echoing xenophobic fears of earlier generations, immigration opponents worry that US citizens will lose control of the country to foreigners. The new anti-immigrant groups fear the significantly growing presence of religiously and physically different immigrants of color (this is different from earlier fears about religiously different Catholics and Jews or the physically different Mediterranean Whites who were dark complexioned). Visible differences, together with the prevalence of languages other than English, constantly remind

multiple-generation US residents about the strangers in their midst, this is especially true for Arab and Muslim Americans, anti-immigration advocates point to these examples as an illustration of a too liberal immigration policy that allowed terrorists in our midst. That virtually all Arabs and Muslim Americans denounce terrorism does little to assuage public perception or fear.

It is not just the increasing visibility of so many 'strangers' in neighborhoods, schools and workplaces that encourages this backlash, the nation's stable birthrate means that immigrants account for a larger share of population growth than in previous years. According to the Population Reference Bureau, that share is 23%. Some demographers interpret this as meaning that the racial composition of the United States will change dramatically in the next two generations, a prospect that is certainly displeasing if not alarming for many.

A major concern pertaining to immigration is economic. The public fears that immigrants take away jobs, drive down wages, and use too many government services at taxpayers' expense. How real these fears are is a moot question.

In 1997, the National Research Council reported that immigrants may add as much as \$10 billion to the economy each year. Immigrant labor allows many goods and services to be produced more cheaply and provides the work force for some businesses that otherwise could perhaps not exist. These immigrants working for the textile and agricultural industries as well as restaurant and domestic household services, primarily compete each other and with US citizens who lack a high school diploma and in some areas with large concentrations of low-skilled, low-paid immigrants, such as California, taxpayers at both state and local levels pay more on average to support the publicly funded services needed by these immigrants. Still, economists say, immigrants and their children bring long-term benefits for most US taxpayers because just like most US residents, they and their descendants will add more to government coffers than they remove over their lifetimes.

Despite statistics Americans have mixed feelings and varying opinions about immigration, and they did so even before the September 2001. In the early 1990s, a majority of Americans held views that were negative- as revealed by a 1992 Business Week, 68% of all respondents said immigration was bad for the country. The US enjoyed a booming economy throughout the rest of the decade, public opinion about immigration changed and 62% appeared to approve of immigration and only 31% thought it was bad. Hispanics thought more favorably of immigration (71%) than did Blacks (61%) or Whites (62%). As for past immigration the opinion was even more positive with 75% believing it was a good thing and only 20% seeing it as bad for the country.

Three months after this poll the vicious acts of terrorism rekindled anti-immigrant sentiments. For some the focus was narrowly confined to Arabs and Muslims; for others these acts served as the impetus to urge for the curtailment of all immigration. A Fox News opinion poll in November 2001 found that 65% of Americans favored stopping all immigration, and a January 2002 Gallup poll reported that 58% of Americans thought immigration should be decreased.

Often the 'undocumented aliens' issue fortifies the anti-immigrant stance. Despite recent laws imposing severe sanctions on employers who hire undocumented aliens, a large number of people from foreign lands continue to slip across US borders. Official estimates place the number of undocumented aliens living in the US at 7 million (two thirds of them are Mexican), a total based on census surveys and immigration service statistics. Slightly more than half of this number first arrived as visitors (tourists, students, or businesspeople) and then simply overstayed their visas, these illegals came from a wide range countries, with the largest population groups originating from Mexico, Canada, Jamaica, Indonesia, the Dominican Republic, and Pakistan.

In the aftermath of the 9/11 attacks, amid concerns about insufficient screening of aliens coming to the United States and the growing presence of undocumented aliens, as well as ongoing public and government concern about further acts of terrorism, the national security priority may lead to stronger enforcement against all undocumented aliens, not just those from Muslim countries.

The strong hostility against undocumented aliens often carries over to negative reactions against legal immigrants. The most notable public action thus far against undocumented aliens was the California voters' approval of Proposition 187 in 1994. Designed to block publicly funded health and education benefits to undocumented aliens, its implementation was thwarted by an adverse court ruling on constitutional grounds.

At this point we could discuss concepts of Multiculturalism, Assimilation, also the 'mosaic' and the 'melting pot' metaphors. We will probably during the Q & A, I would however like to point out that assuming the present demographic trends will continue, the Census Bureau projects a dramatic change in the composition of US society by the mid-twenty-first century. Their estimate includes an average of 1 million immigrants and 200,000 undocumented aliens entering the country each year for the next five decades. Thus the cumulative effects of immigration will be more important than births to people already living in the United States. By the mid-twenty-first century, 21% of the population- an estimated 82 million- will be either immigrants who arrived after 1991 or children of those immigrants.

By 2050, Hispanics will number 98.2 million, or 24% of the total population. The Census Bureau projects that African Americans will then number about 53.5 million or 13%. These are midrange projections, not high or low estimates. The nation's Asian and Pacific Islander population will grow to 9 % by 2050. Native Americans will have increased to slightly more than 1 % of the total. The number of non- Hispanic Whites will be 213 million by 2050, or 53% of the population.

Many observers have been greatly perturbed by these projections and used their alarm to point out that immigration restrictions must be considered very seriously. Others relish the thought of US society becoming more diverse. It must however be kept in mind that these projections have their limitations- the first being the assumption that conditions worldwide will remain constant 50 or more years into the future, certainly 50 years ago, no one would have predicted the current birth, death, and migration patterns that effect the US. A forecast thus of 2050 is far from certain. The second limitation would lead to the high probability of having to reinterpret the Census Bureau projections because who is to say that today's group categories will have the same meaning in the mid-twenty-first century? Fifty years ago Italian, Polish, and Slavic Americans were still members of distinct minority groups that lacked economic, political and social power and they displayed all the classic characteristics of minority groups but today they are mostly in the mainstream, displaying traits of assimilation. Fifty years from now, the same may be true of other groups, such as Hispanics. Two generations from now, Americans will likely view one another very differently from how we do now.

I am not implying that all differences will be swept away, far from it- but our focus and concerns could and would be different. While demographic variables, patterns of fertility, mortality, and migration are helpful in making projections; other patterns give reason for caution in predicting the future. Indicators of ethno-religious change like 'interethnic marriages' and 'interracial marriages' will compound the mix.

Religion is an important variable in Migration. Earlier immigration waves transformed the United States from an exclusively Protestant country into a land of three major faiths: Catholic, Jewish and Protestant. Latino and Filipino migration may increase the Catholic population from the current one-fourth to one-third by 2050. Migration from Africa, Asia, and the Middle East may increase the Muslim population from 1% of the total to 5%. Projections are that the Jewish population will decline from 2% to 1% and the Protestant population from 54% to 49%; the populations of other religions will increase from 4% to 5%. Even if these projections turn out to be somewhat inaccurate, the future will show greater religious diversity than the present does.

Diversity is the word that best describes the past, present, and the future of the United States. United by a core culture and shared beliefs in certain ideals, the nation's peoples have not always understood their common bond or openly accepted one another as equals. Few people recognize that they are witnessing a recurring set of historical patterns, thus some voices cry out against immigration, brand the newcomers as "un-assimilable", and express fear for the character and cohesiveness of society.

The United States has never fully resolved its race relations problems. As it becomes a more multiracial society than ever before, it may witness a worsening of race relations, there is evidence of Black-Asian and Black-Latino conflicts in addition to Black-White conflicts. On an optimistic note, the situation may well improve with a deconstruction of the rigid racial categories that presently promote greater social distance and with more sharing of power through the increased presence of non-White Americans in elected offices and other policymaking positions.

If knowledge is power, then this Age of Information perhaps will lead us to greater appreciation and tolerance for one another. Pluralism has always been part of the US experience and it does not threaten either the assimilation process or the cohesiveness of society. When we reach a level of understanding where we can see race and ethnicity simply as other people's humanity, we will be able to recognize and acknowledge that diversity is the strength of this nation not its weakness.

Here I will rest my case and I will take this opportunity to introduce to you Fr. Marino who is the Episcopal Vicar for Migrant and Ethnic Apostolates of the Diocese of Brooklyn, and has over 25 years of experience working for immigrants in the Catholic Migration Office of the Brooklyn diocese of which he serves as Director. He was ordained a Priest in 1973 after having obtained his Bachelor of Arts degree from Cathedral College in Douglaston, NY and a Master of Divinity Degree from Immaculate Conception Seminary in Huntington, NY. He continued his past graduate studies and obtained a Master of Science in Education (Counseling) from St. John's University in NY. He is also Director of *Resources, Inc.* a nationally recognized job opportunity program for immigrants which he himself founded in 1994. He is frequently called upon to speak on immigrant pastoral issues both nationally and internationally. It is my pleasure to introduce to you Msgr. Marino.

Marino: Thank you very much. I am going to speak to you about why the Catholic Church is so involved in the immigration reform issue, why it's an important matter for Catholics, why it's so important for Catholics to take strong positions on immigration matters.

Knowing who I am and what I have worked on for over 25 years, I am sure you can easily guess where I stand on the matter of Immigration and the reform of our current system. However, I am not always sure that people can understand or easily see WHY I, and the Catholic Church, in who's name I act, hold such strong positions on this matter.

To sum it up, let me tell you that our positions are driven by Scriptural imperatives, cultural awareness, the direct command of our Savior and Lord Jesus Christ that His followers must welcome the strangers in their midst, and in so doing we are welcoming Him. We are also guided by clear, consistent and strong Catholic social teaching of Popes and Catholic Bishops Conferences throughout history and around the world, and an understanding of Christian morality and justice which makes us see immigration as a moral issue, not just a legal issue.

People do not go through the trauma of uprooting themselves and their families for frivolous reasons. Evidence mounts that the present global migration can be explained by several key factors. Poverty, hunger, violence, disregard of human rights and the search for economic and intellectual fulfillment unavailable at home are among the root causes of this exodus. Despite the numbers, the United States experiences only a small part of this global phenomenon. Any approach to migration which ignores the root causes of this phenomenon is short-sighted and will ultimately fail.

From the pastoral point of view, we must also add that people flee their homeland also not so much because of economic poverty, but more so, for moral poverty. Undignified working conditions, forced abortions, slave labor, sterilizations, and the simple and just desire for families to be reunited and to live together, also cause people to seek freedom. The Church advocates the creation of “immigrant policies” not just “immigration policies.”

How does culture influence the positions we take? The great Jesuit sociologist Fr. Joseph Fitzpatrick defined culture as that which makes me “essentially myself.” It is the sum total of the ways of believing, thinking, feeling, behaving, interacting, etc., which constitutes “my way of life.” It is that which makes me Japanese rather than Italian; a native of India rather than a native of Uganda. It is a pattern of expected behavior, it is the sum total of meanings that things have for a person in one culture rather than another. It is the meaning of a handshake rather than a kiss, or an embrace or a bow as a greeting; it is the tone of voice that means an insult or a scolding, or a cheer or a shout of joy. My culture permeates the whole of my being and prompts me to respond to situations and events in a certain way.

The implications of culture in cities where large numbers of immigrants from different countries live, can be very vital to peace and harmony in a community or can themselves be the cause of violence.

A basic principle of cultural awareness is that people discover what their own culture is after they leave it. Immigrants are, therefore, in the process of discovering who they really are and what is most basic to them. That is why the faith they bring with them is such an integral part of their strength when they arrive. Searching for and understanding the basic meaning of life is what we call “theologizing.” Who would have ever thought that immigrants are “walking theologians?”

Another basic principle is that people integrate from a position of strength. The more they are made to feel secure about their identity, the easier they will add it to the dominant culture of their new home. A society which demands conformity at all costs to its own identity, will find immigrants resisting all the more for fear of losing the little they have left to hold onto.

Recognizing these basic principles and the huge diversity which exists even only among Catholic immigrants, the Church knows that when a person’s culture changes, often the faith changes as well. The Second Vatican Council taught us that the Church is the Sacrament of the unity of all mankind. The Catholicity of the Church must become a spiritual experience. Catholicity is a goal, not a given. We believe that Jesus Christ transcends all cultures. After all, the Holy Family fleeing

into Egypt to escape Herod's soldiers were the first refugees. From the Pentecost experience we know that the first Christians were multi-ethnic. From the very first day of its existence, the Catholic Church has been a multi-lingual Church ! In the early Church, emigration was used as missionary outreach.

Pope John 23rd once wrote, "We are here on earth not to guard a museum, but to cultivate a garden flourishing with life." One just needs to examine the pastoral methodology of many dioceses like Brooklyn to realize the truth of these words.

The Church pre-dates the formation of nation states and her teachings supersede border considerations. They are a rule of life for all peoples and underlay the very way governments were formed.

The attitude of the Catholic Church, especially in America, gives a unique insight into understanding who immigrants are and how to help them integrate into society without losing their basic human dignity. For the Church in the Diocese of Brooklyn, a microcosm of the whole world, these teachings cause us to act not in favor of religion, but in favor of the human person and his freedom which is the heart and soul of the constitution of our country. One need only to become familiar with the Catholic Migration Office and Resources, Inc. of the Diocese to see the comprehensive approach which we have taken in our response to the presence of newcomers.

On the National level, the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops has issued many documents and Pastoral Letters as official teaching of the Catholic Church regarding immigration and culture.

The Bishops' Conference itself has as its largest department "Migration and Refugee Services." It also has a division called the " Office of Pastoral Care of Migrants and Refugees" which covers the pastoral concerns of all the different ethnic Apostolates in the country, as well as Airport and Seaport Chaplaincies, Circus and Carnival Chaplaincies, Migrant Farm workers and even Truck Stop Ministries.

Along with this are national offices for immigrant and refugee policy issues, congressional legislative liaisons and staff who work on international issues. The credibility of the Catholic Church in America on the immigrant questions can be surpassed by no one.

The anti-immigrant reactions caused by the tragedy of September 11, 2001 have also brought about a conflict between Church teachings and behaviors regarding newcomers here, and misguided feelings of patriotism and nationalism on the part of many Americans. The Church walks a fine and delicate line on these issues, since we must obey the laws of this country while standing up for the truth as we see it through our Catholic culture.

Still, too many Catholics believe the myths surrounding immigration based on misunderstandings and misconceptions. The Church finds itself at present in the midst of a campaign to combat ignorance of its own teachings on the part of many Catholics in our parishes. We are trying to educate our own people and change minds and hearts on this issue.

The simple undeniable fact is that the Catholic Church in the United States is an immigrant Church, and the sooner we understand who we are, the faster our attitudes and values will change.

For this reason I thank the organizers of tonight's event for giving us all an opportunity to examine and change our own hearts and minds. Thank you.

Mathur: Thank you, Fr. Marino. Our next speaker some of you are already familiar with if you were here for the first part of today's program. Mr. Pierre Bonnefil is a member of Epstein Becker & Green in the Immigration practice in the firm's New York office. He is also a member of the firm's Hispanic Business Group and International Trade practice. He has served as an Attorney General Honors Attorney with the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS), and has extensive experience representing both companies and individuals. Currently, Mr. Bonnefil acts as Immigration Counsel for the French Consulate General in New York; he represents clients in immigration court, before various offices of the USCIS, the Department of Labor, and the Department of State; he counsels clients as to their legal rights and assists them in preparing and processing petitions to acquire temporary visas or permanent residence in the US, and he prepares and gives presentations to clients on pertinent immigration issues. As an attorney with the USCIS, Mr. Bonnefil evaluated, prepared and prosecuted cases against detained aliens in immigration court. He has also hosted and appeared on numerous television and radio programs on immigration, has lectured at St. John's University School of Law, and has served as an Immigration Counselor at Medgar Evers College. Mr. Bonnefil has written on such topics as "Global Immigration for the Multinational" and "Illegal Immigration and Immigrant Responsibility Act." We are honored indeed to have such a knowledgeable and experienced speaker with us this.

Bonnefil: It's very hard to follow Fr. Marino in this because he spoke very, very well about what the Church thinks and what the Church's position is on immigration. The problem that we have right now, obviously, is that the immigration situation in the United States is, to be very blunt, a mess. There's constant talk. It's now the election season and people are talking about immigration left and right, and to me it's a double-edged sword—having not been born in this country, coming from Haiti when I was quite young, and seeing what I was able to do...obviously I entered the country legally and I was able to become an attorney, and I work at a very successful law firm, and I'm quite happy about what I've done. But a lot of people are not as lucky as I was. During my years with immigration I had seen individuals who had come in, either snuck across the border or overstayed, and now they're facing an uphill battle with what to do. What should we do? Obviously we're paying our taxes, we're doing what we can, and we cannot get a visa; we cannot stay here; we can't be green card holders; we cannot be citizens, and we can't be like you. What can we do? The unfortunate situation is that with the current law, for a lot of these people, there's nothing that can be done. When people say to me, "Come on, you're an attorney. Look at you. Look at where you sit. Come on! I'll pay you anything." And I'll look them straight in the eyes and I'll tell them, "I'm very, very sorry, but there's nothing that I can do for you. Just continue doing what you're doing. Continue being the best person you can be. Pay your taxes if you're paying your taxes, and continue living your life."

There is a situation right now that is getting worse day by day by day. The foreign nationals in this country—people estimate that there are 7 million, I think there is double or triple that. How can you count people who don't want to be counted? How can you figure that out? All you really need to do, working in New York or living in New York or wherever, is just look around you. The people to your right, the people to your left are folks who probably don't have the proper paperwork to be here. And the issue has come up, what do we do? What do we do with these people? Do we put them on a boat? Do we send them home? Do we just put them in planes and ship them off? How are we going to suffer by doing that? What I tell people all the time is, "Remember what makes this

country great.” What has brought us to where we are is really the diversity that’s out there, and there are some people, like myself, who are lucky enough to have come here legally, but obviously there are others who are not.

Not too long ago there was a young lady who had come to see me who had come here from Trinidad, but overstayed her visitors’ visa, and went through, not only high school, but went through college, law school, she took the bar and passed it, and she’s a member of the New York Bar, but because she doesn’t have a social security number or any sort of work permit, she cannot work. She has done everything she possibly can do, and when she came to me and said, “Pierre, please help me. What can you do for me?” I had to look her in the eyes and say, “I can’t do anything for you. Apart from maybe a private bill, there’s nothing that I can do.”

So this is what we’re looking at now, plus we’re looking at the immigration and customs enforcement, and the raids that are taking place, and a very strong-handed approach of making sure that employers are compliant with their I-9 documents, and that they’re doing everything that they can to hire legals in this country, people who are legally authorized to work in this country.

What the focus is, what I have seen, initially back to September 10, 2001, there was a conversation between the President of Mexico and the President of the United States about doing a guest worker program, which is part of the Senate bill which has been stuck over there in Senate-land, wherever that is, for quite a while. The idea was that you were going to be able to try to help these folks who are here, and give some certain obstacles, maybe make them do certain things, but the idea was to really try and legalize a lot of these people. It was going to happen, and then, obviously, on September 11th we know what happened. What that has done is changed the focus now drastically from compliance issues here, from people who are trying to come in across the border, from allocation visas, from really the focus of immigration has not been in solving this problem that’s not going to go away....what has been happening is that now there’s more of a focus on enforcement.

The budget for enforcement has gone up dramatically over the years. If you’ve been reading the newspapers and watching the news, there have been arrests made, plant closures, and it’s been hitting a lot of the companies in their stomach, in their money pocket. There’s a particular case, the Swift case, where the company lost an estimated 30 million dollars because of the raids that took place. So the government is focusing more now on enforcement, and not on trying to solve the problem that is not going to go away.

What I see right now are two particular bills that are out there. One of them is the senate bill, and one of them is the house bill. They are very different. The house bill is really getting to a point where it’s going to make it a criminal offense if it passes, for folks helping folks who are illegal, foreigners who are here out-of-status. So a situation where Fr. Marino is helping out hundreds if not thousands of foreign nationals each week, he could be considered to be a criminal because he is assisting individuals who need help. I’m not any sort of big immigration guy running up and down, but to me and to anybody here, I can see from the shakings of the head, that is wrong. Obviously that is something that should not pass. But it’s scary because it’s something that was voted on in the house and passed. The senate bill, on the other hand, is a little less restrictive and is really out there trying to set up more H1V visas for folks, more green cards, etc....So they are really two very different animals.

The interesting thing for me is what's going to happen in terms of you're going to have this law and this one and there is going to be, the way government works, a committee forum. The committee is going to have to sit down and they're going to have to analyze this and they're going to have to come up with a consensus which is going to be very difficult. They will eventually come up with a consensus, and then the law will have to be signed by the President. Is that going to happen tomorrow? People keep telling me, "I hear that there's a guest worker program. Does that mean it's going to help me? Am I going to be able to get me green card, my work permit?" I don't know. I really don't know. And it almost seems like it's something that people are afraid of dealing with, but to me it's something that is not going to go away. It's there and it's growing.

As we know, the immigrant population, both illegal and legal, is growing every single day. So, to me, it's not going to go away; it's something that needs to be resolved. Is there a perfect solution? Is there an answer that I can give to you right now? Obviously not. But I think it's something that needs to be worked on because the alternative of saying, "Well, we're going to put everybody on a boat," or "We're going to put everybody on a plane,"—not only is it impossible to do, it's just wrong.

It's very interesting for me. I keep my finger on the pulse and I constantly look on the Web sites to see what's going on, if things are moving. For a while things were moving and then they just stopped. Right now there are bills that have been introduced but they haven't been voted on like the two I mentioned. These two have been in a holding pattern for quite a while and, unfortunately, I think they're going to be there for a bit longer because I don't know if this congress is going to vote on them, but hopefully they will, and hopefully they'll hear your voices, and hopefully things will change. Thank you.

Simmonds: We warmly thank again our panelists for their deep insights. If you are interested in receiving updates on Crossroads activities, please leave your name, address and e-mail (printing clearly) at the information desk outside this room where you will be added to our e-mail list.

Our next event is Wednesday, May 23, 2007, at 7:00 PM in New York University, at Casa Italiana Zerilli-Marimo, "Viva le Femmine: Women in Mozart's Operas" a selection from Mozart with commentary by musicologist Kristi Brown author of the newly released Understanding the Women of Mozart's Operas. Thank you and good night.