

stated reason was “national security”: they might be Nazi spies, the government said. Today, we’re told the same thing about displaced Syrians and Iraqis: that they could be terrorists. By the end of 2016 the United States had admitted only 18,007 Syrian refugees — out of 11 *million* displaced Syrians.



Throughout U.S. history, immigrants have faced hostility from “nativists.” The Irish were once a favorite target, as this old sign from Boston suggests.

MYTH: The United States doesn’t owe foreigners anything

FACT: U.S. foreign policy is largely responsible for the conditions that produce migrants and refugees. In Latin America, our government has historically opposed efforts to redistribute wealth, instead supporting right-wing tyrants who kill and torture dissidents. In Guatemala in 1954, the U.S. helped overthrow an elected government, ushering in forty years of state violence that killed over 200,000 people. In El Salvador in the 1980s, it funded a military government that murdered 75,000 people. Economically, the United States has supported pro-corporate policies that destroy local economies and undermine workers’ wages. NAFTA flooded the Mexican market with cheap U.S. corn, destroying 1.9 million agricultural jobs (at the same time that it also hurt workers in the United States).⁶

The U.S. role in the Middle East has been even more destructive. The 2003 U.S. invasion of Iraq killed or displaced millions of people and

plunged the region into sectarian chaos, fueling the rise of ISIS and other extremists. Climate chaos — a problem to which U.S. polluters have contributed more than anyone else — is part of the reason for the Syrian civil war and will generate higher and higher numbers of refugees in the years to come. U.S. elites bear heavy blame for the Middle East refugee crisis and they must take responsibility for their actions.

So what can we do about it?

Only when immigrants and the native-born unite can we achieve justice. When diverse groups of workers organize together against the bosses, the entire working class benefits in the form of higher wages. Research has shown that greater racial equality among workers correlates with higher wages across the board — including for whites.⁷

We must organize all working people in one big coalition. That requires fighting against racism, sexism, homophobia, and U.S. imperialism, as well as the class exploitation that victimizes us all. We must defend the most vulnerable workers among us against deportation, wage theft, hate crimes, and all other injustice. To get involved in western Massachusetts, find the *Pioneer Valley Workers Center* on Facebook.

SOURCES

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IMMIGRANTS IN THE UNITED STATES

MYTH vs. FACT



Facts Inside:

Immigrants commit LESS crime than everyone else

They DO pay taxes, yet often can’t use public services

When immigrants win, we ALL win (except the 1%)

...and more!



Northampton, MA
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Myths tend to survive because they're useful to powerful people.

Myths about immigrants and refugees are no exception. Bosses like to pit workers against each other. Corporations want the freedom to cross national borders, but they don't want workers to be able to do the same. They want immigration that serves their needs, but they don't want immigrants with *rights* — it's better to have undocumented workers who are terrified of deportation and resented by native-born workers. Political leaders, meanwhile, love to scapegoat immigrants and refugees to distract us from our real problems.

Of the many myths about foreign-born people, these are some of the most common.

MYTH: Immigrants are more prone to violent crime

FACT: Immigrants are far *less* likely than others to engage in crime. The native-born are incarcerated at much higher rates than immigrants. In fact, violent crime rates have dropped by 48 percent since 1990 — just as the number of undocumented immigrants was rising from 3.5 million to 11.2 million.¹

Are refugees terrorists? From 1975 to 2015, a U.S. citizen's chance of dying at the hands of a refugee terrorist was 1 in 3.6 *billion* a year. In 2015 the Migration Policy Institute reported that “the United States has resettled 784,000 refugees since September 11, 2001,” and “exactly *three* resettled refugees have been arrested for planning terrorist activities”; of those, “two were not planning an attack in the United States and the plans of the third were barely credible.” Most of the terrorist attacks on U.S. soil are committed by white, non-Muslim, right-wing extremists.²

MYTH: Immigrants don't pay taxes

FACT: All undocumented immigrants pay sales taxes and property taxes. Most also pay income and payroll taxes, since their employers list them on payrolls using fake Social Security numbers. However, they are usually ineligible for Social Security benefits, food stamps, welfare, and unemployment insurance. As a result, virtually all undocumented immigrants pay more in taxes than they will ever receive in the form of social services and benefits.³

MYTH: Immigrants steal jobs from U.S. workers and drag down wages

FACT: Increased immigration has only small effects on employment and wages, and those effects are likely *positive*. When immigrants spend money, they create demand in the economy, leading to the creation of more jobs. As for wages, a 2015 study found that higher immigrant employment has a positive impact on the wages of non-immigrant workers, probably because it increases the range of skills available and leads to more efficient specialization.⁴

The impact on U.S.-born workers depends partly on how we as workers respond. When we discriminate against immigrants, it makes the entire working class weaker in relation to our bosses. A unified workforce can improve life for all workers.



MYTH: They could come here legally, if they'd just “get in line” and wait

FACT: For most foreigners there isn't any *line* to get into. Entering legally usually requires 1) a U.S. employer who will “sponsor” you, 2) a close relative with U.S. citizenship or permanent legal status, or 3) a demonstrated threat of extreme persecution in your home country. Even then, it can take years or even decades to obtain “legal” status.⁵ But most people from other countries do not meet any of these three requirements.

These requirements were only enacted in the 20th century. Prior to World War I, there were almost no restrictions on immigration. The ancestors of most white U.S. citizens were thus free to enter. Today's immigrants face a much harsher legal climate.

MYTH: The U.S. has historically welcomed immigrants and refugees

FACT: Most immigrants, especially non-whites, have encountered hostility. In the 19th century, the Irish and Italians were accused of stealing jobs, using public resources, and committing violent crimes. The Chinese had it even worse: they suffered segregation and intense racism, and in 1882 — the year of the first federal anti-immigration law — Chinese workers were prohibited from entering the U.S. altogether. Almost all non-whites were barred from entering by the 1924 Johnson Immigration Act. When immigrants *have* been welcomed in, it's usually to serve as a cheap labor source with few rights.

U.S. policy toward refugees has been just as cruel. Even as the U.S. government was waging a war against Nazi expansionism, it was barring Jewish refugees from obtaining asylum. The