

Discussion Questions: **12 Questions you should be asking**

1. We know now that as many as 12 million undocumented immigrants are living in the U.S. but few in the U.S. are talking about the multitude of factors that contributed to this phenomenon. What do you think are the top 3 individual reasons that undocumented immigrants from Latin America have for making the long and dangerous journey to the U.S.? What broader, macro-level factors could be involved?
2. How does the U.S. contribute to the pressures for Latin Americans to migrate? Are there specific policies that can be linked to the migration phenomenon?
3. Since the early 1990s, an estimated 3,000+ migrants have lost their lives during their journey to the US. Known migrant deaths on the border increased every year from 2000-2005, with a peak in 2005 of 473 (279 in Arizona alone). What do you think may have caused the dramatic numbers of deaths? What does this suggest about the decision to migrate?
4. Over the past 6 years, studies show a significant rise in the number of women, children, and indigenous people migrating from Mexico to the U.S. What are the possible causes of this shift? What additional challenges might face individuals from these nontraditional migrant groups?
5. Why does so much undocumented immigration exist? Why don't migrants use legal routes to come to the U.S.?
6. The cost of paying a coyote (smuggler) to assist crossing the border has increased from \$300/person several years ago to \$1500-\$2000/person today. What is the relationship between militarization of the U.S.-Mexican border and the human smuggling industry? How do migrants find the resources needed to get to the U.S.?
7. Many towns in southern Mexico have been virtually depopulated of men between the ages of 18 and 40. What effect might this have on children, families, the social structure of the community, etc.?
8. U.S. free trade policy isn't really free in many regards. One of the most significant has to do with large subsidies given by the U.S. government to large-scale U.S. agribusiness. With subsidies, such businesses can profit by selling their products for under the cost of production while out-competing smaller farmers in Mexico because NAFTA has removed nearly all trade barriers. What is the result of this for the Mexican farmer and her/his family?
9. NAFTA in many regards allowed for the free flow of capital but NOT the free flow of people. According to the North American Integration and Development Center at UCLA, over 10 million Mexican migrants have crossed the border into the U.S. since the passage of NAFTA and have contributed more to the economies of Mexico and the U.S. than the treaty itself. This is due to the fact that remittances (or the money migrants send home to their families) represents an average of 10% of their earnings, while 90% of their earnings is spent in the U.S. Additionally, remittances account for the single greatest source of foreign income in Mexico after petroleum exports. How is this picture different than the picture of immigration we see in the mainstream media and political debate?
10. What economic alternatives exist for people in Latin America confronted with the need to migrate? What role is there for U.S. citizens in supporting the development of such alternatives?
11. Globalization has had tremendous impacts on the world over the past 20 – 30 years, some of it negative and some of it positive, some of it more favorable to certain people and some of it detrimental to others. What general trends over the last 20 years—in the realm of economic policy and decision-making—do you think account for increasing migration?
12. What is missing from the policy discussions on migration in the United States? What suggestions or additions would you make for the benefit of the debate? What all needs to be included in any campaign for “comprehensive immigration reform.”