

# **BEHIND THE BRAINPOWER TECH WORKERS ON VISAS HELP FUEL SILICON VALLEY INNOVATION**

San Jose Mercury News (California)

January 22, 2000 Saturday MORNING FINAL EDITION

Copyright 2000 San Jose Mercury News All Rights Reserved

**Section:** EDITORIAL; Pg. 7B

**Length:** 522 words

## **Body**

---

AS the head of a local staffing and services business that engages technical professionals on H-1B visas, I felt compelled to respond to your recent article, "High tech's imported brainpower" (Page 1A, Jan. 16).

Frankly, the article's verbiage ("the 'bodies' return to the bodyshop") gave cause to believe I was reading some B-grade sci-fi script. What happened to the issue of brainpower?

Access to technical brainpower has been and is a critical issue for Bay Area companies, whose combined voices have resulted in legislation enabling broader participation. This is a global market with global players and represents a huge opportunity for local companies to increase business in the exploding IT arena. The "bodies" to which you refer help create the intellectual property that fuels our local companies. These people have earned technical degrees and worked hard in pursuit of their interests. Without them, we would be less able to compete on the world stage and sorely behind the power curve in technical innovation. Their brains were to have been the subject of your article; their bodies are simply a necessary attachment.

Say what you will about the staffing business and the "small offices on side streets off exhaust-choked Mahatma Gandhi Road." You don't insult me, but you stereotype and tarnish the image of many bright and talented people who bring much value to our thriving economy.

Dave Sornson

President, iBongo, Inc.

Cupertino

IN her recent article on Indians in the Silicon Valley, it seems that Sara Lubman has violated one of the key rules of good reporting. When she writes about Indian recruits she needs to stay away from describing an individual lifestyle as if it were universal among the H-1B community. Perhaps the workers she profiled, Sudhir Wath and his friends, choose to live in a spartan atmosphere, or perhaps they have arrived recently and haven't had time to invest in any furniture. But it is irresponsible on her part to suggest that this is the norm among Indian workers.

At the end of the article she talks about how new hires stick together, cook communally, and make rice in their "narrow kitchens." They "pile" into cars and visit shops which have "sprouted" on the Peninsula. Is it me, or do the verbs here suggest rats, weeds and vermin? It seems to me that such articles, which outline ethnic communities as somehow different, strange and other, are precisely the reason for growing prejudice and suspicion.

Lubman would have done well to research her topic more extensively rather than relying on one programmer and his roommates to form an idea of the entire community's living conditions and outlook. She would also have been welladvised to look at the positive aspects of the H-1B community, including how close-knit they are, how well they adjust to their new environments, how they are always available to help each other out, taking in newcomers and

## BEHIND THE BRAINPOWER TECH WORKERS ON VISAS HELP FUEL SILICON VALLEY INNOVATION

sharing all of their resources, including homes and cars. Focusing on the quality of their sleeping bags or the bareness of their rooms is neither newsworthy nor relevant.

Jyothi Bathina  
Cupertino

## Notes

---

OPINION

## Graphic

---

Photo;

PHOTO: RICK E. MARTIN -- MERCURY NEWS

Contract workers Satish Rane, above left, Sudhir Wath and Bippin Karunakaran receive welcoming gifts from TekEdge Corp. benefits administrator Christine Farkas.

[000122 ED 7B]

## Classification

---

Language: ENGLISH

**Subject:** INTELLIGENCE & COGNITION (90%); EMPLOYMENT AGENCIES (89%); EMPLOYMENT VISAS (89%); TECHNICIANS & TECHNOLOGICAL WORKERS (78%); EMPLOYMENT SERVICES (78%); FOREIGN LABOR (78%); IMPORT TRADE (77%); RACE & ETHNICITY (70%); INTERNATIONAL TRADE (69%); INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY (68%); RODENTS (63%); PROFESSIONAL WORKERS (58%)

**Company:** BAY AREA INSURANCE SERVICES (57%)

**Industry:** EMPLOYMENT AGENCIES (89%); EMPLOYMENT SERVICES (78%)

**Geographic:** SILICON VALLEY, CA, USA (78%); SAN FRANCISCO BAY AREA, CA, USA (72%)

**Load-Date:** January 29, 2002