

The Firing of Immigrants at a Factory

The New York Times

October 4, 2009 Sunday, Late Edition - Final

Copyright 2009 The New York Times Company

Section: Section WK; Column 0; Editorial Desk; Pg. 7; LETTERS

Length: 622 words

Body

To the Editor:

I was a fervent supporter of Barack Obama throughout his presidential campaign, but I was concerned about his plans for the approximately 12 million undocumented immigrants in this country. He said something about bringing them out of the shadows by creating a path to citizenship, but gave no details.

Now I learn from your Sept. 30 front-page article "Immigrant Crackdown Leads to 1,800 Pink Slips" that the firings of 1,800 employees at the American Apparel factory in Los Angeles "have become a showcase for the Obama administration's effort to reduce illegal immigration."

The administration seems to have no concern for the hardships that will result for the children and elderly relatives supported by the wages earned by these hard-working, taxpaying immigrants, who, by the way, will be forced to return to the shadows.

Joan Potter Mount Kisco, N.Y., Sept. 30, 2009

To the Editor:

I am a manager of one of the busiest movie theaters in the Silicon Valley. When I hear that there are some jobs that Americans won't do, I look at the former engineers, machinists and other skilled workers whom I have cleaning up auditoriums and restrooms, every one of them screened to make sure they are here legally, and realize there is absolutely no truth to it.

While reading your article about the firing of illegal immigrants, I did not feel that this was the loss of 1,800 jobs at American Apparel, but rather the opening of 1,800 potential jobs for people who are here legally.

If we really need more immigrants working for us in our country, then we should be working toward liberalizing immigration, not endorsing illegal immigration.

Edward K. Smallwood San Jose, Calif., Sept. 30, 2009

To the Editor:

It is ironic that the same issue of The Times had two radically different articles about immigration. One was about a museum that pays tribute to the courage and spirit of Chinese immigrants of the late 19th and early 20th centuries ("Immigration Stories, From Shadows to Spotlight"). These immigrants overcame virulent racial prejudice in order to establish themselves as Americans who, together with their descendants, have made great contributions to this country's heritage.

The Firing of Immigrants at a Factory

The other article described 1,800 of today's foreign-born workers who have been forced to leave their jobs with a leading American manufacturing company by government policies designed to appeal to popular feeling against Hispanic and Asian immigrants.

Like their Chinese predecessors, many of today's hardest-working and most productive immigrants have been forced to improvise ways of getting around harsh laws intended to slam the gates to America shut against them.

It is easy to condemn them as "illegal." But in many ways they are the true inheritors of the American dream.

Roger Algase New York, Sept. 30, 2009

To the Editor:

The dismissals at American Apparel highlight the wrongheadedness of the fight against illegal immigration. This is an employer who has chosen to manufacture its goods in America, in an industry where manufacturing is usually done using cheap labor in another country.

The message this action sends is that you are better off legally hiring a worker in Mexico, for a fraction of the cost and with no benefit to the American economy, than paying a work force, legal or not, a reasonable wage here. The money that was paid to these workers was not only spent here but taxed here as well.

Why is it all right to send billions of dollars to workers in other countries, but it is not all right to sustain a very small percentage of necessary employees in this country who may not be citizens but are a vital part of our economy?

Michael Walker Bellport, N.Y., Oct. 1, 2009

<http://www.nytimes.com>

Classification

Language: ENGLISH

Document-Type: Letter

Publication-Type: Newspaper

Subject: IMMIGRATION (91%); ILLEGAL IMMIGRANTS (90%); US PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATES 2012 (90%); FACTORY WORKERS (90%); US PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATES 2008 (90%); CAMPAIGNS & ELECTIONS (89%); CITIZENSHIP (78%); US PRESIDENTS (78%); RACE & ETHNICITY (77%); CITIZENSHIP LAW (77%); EMPLOYEE TERMINATION (76%); TECHNICIANS & TECHNOLOGICAL WORKERS (75%); GARMENT WORKERS (75%); PUBLIC POLICY (75%); CRAFT & TRADE WORKERS (75%); MANUFACTURING FACILITIES (75%); LAYOFFS (75%); RACISM & XENOPHOBIA (72%)

Industry: FACTORY WORKERS (90%); GARMENT WORKERS (75%); APPAREL MFG (75%); MANUFACTURING FACILITIES (75%); MUSEUMS & GALLERIES (50%)

Person: BARACK OBAMA (88%)

The Firing of Immigrants at a Factory

Geographic: SAN JOSE, CA, USA (79%); LOS ANGELES, CA, USA (79%); SAN FRANCISCO BAY AREA, CA, USA (70%); SILICON VALLEY, CA, USA (55%); CALIFORNIA, USA (92%); UNITED STATES (96%)

Load-Date: October 4, 2009

End of Document