

Non-Mexicans want amnesty, too;

Immigrants complain: Bush proposal would pit nationalities against one another, critics say.

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Body

Dressed in a gray T-shirt with the words "USA" emblazoned across his chest, Eduardo Caballero went to work Wednesday angry at America.

Angry because Caballero works hard from dawn to dusk as a day laborer but would not qualify for legal residency under a plan being weighed by the **Bush** administration. That **proposal** would grant **amnesty** to some 3 million Mexicans living illegally in the United States.

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Caballero, like his co-workers waiting for a ride Wednesday morning at the Chamblee MARTA station, is from Colombia. He echoed other **immigrants' complaints** of unfair treatment.

"It's discrimination," **said** Caballero, an animated 21-year-old. "Why should the Mexicans be singled out for special treatment when there are three times as many of us from other countries as them?"

Another worker, Luis Obregon, shook his head and smiled: "Maybe they think only Mexicans work in bad conditions."

The exchange highlights what is likely to be a controversial debate among **immigrant** communities as details of President George W. **Bush's** plan unfold. White House spokesman Ari Fleischer **said** the president was committed to working with the Mexican government to ease "what has been a disorderly process" along the 2,000-mile border.

Immigrant advocates fear that the final **Bush** plan, if it grants **amnesty** to only Mexicans, could **pit one immigrant** group **against another**.

"I don't know what good can come out of telling **one** set of people, 'you're in' and telling **another**, 'sorry,' " **said** Steve Choi, president of the Asian American Coalition.

Bangladeshi native Lasker Sabbir, who overstayed his tourist visa and now lives the typical furtive life of an illegal **immigrant**, **said** that if **Bush's amnesty** deal is an attempt to court the Hispanic vote, as some **critics** have suggested, offering a blanket **amnesty** to all undocumented workers makes far more political sense.

"Imagine how many more millions of **immigrants** will gratefully vote for him in 2005?", he **said**.

There are as many as 11 million illegal **immigrants** living in the United States, with Mexicans making up more than **one-third**. The Mexican Consulate in Atlanta **says** about 450,000 Mexican nationals live in Georgia, including

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225,000 to 270,000 who are here illegally. Many details of the administration's amnesty plan have yet to be worked out. The last general amnesty for illegal immigrants in 1986 took several years to pass in Congress.

This time, lawmakers from both parties have expressed reservations about a blanket amnesty. Even some immigrant advocacy groups object to the proposal.

"Every time an administration extends such amnesty deals, they overburden an already under- staffed INS (Immigration and Naturalization Service)," said Narender G. Reddy, president of the Indo American Forum for Political Education. "And the ones who bear the brunt of such ill-thought-out moves are the legal immigrants who have to wait two, three, four years to get their paperwork processed."

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