

## **Black Community Must Wake Up to the Illegal Immigration Threat**

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Currently, the US Congress is embroiled in one of the most contentious legislative battles since Reconstruction. What's the basis of the alarm? Some in Congress are being pressured by businesses that favor a liberal immigration program because of the resulting availability of low wage workers. Businesses see immigrant workers as a source of cheap labor to produce their products, or provide their services. The defense of that position is that without a huge supply of low wage workers, these companies would be forced to hire Americans at wages that they claim would cause sharp increases in the prices of their goods and services. From the perspective of business, the immigration bill would mean higher profit margins and lower prices to their customers.

But what does this mean to the black community? Will low-skilled African American workers suffer because of the endless supply of low skilled labor? Also, will whites choose to hire immigrant workers over blacks? According to the statistics this is quickly becoming the case. Nationwide, the African American unemployment rate was 9.5% compared to 3.8% for Hispanics in 2006. In Miami-Dade County, where illegal immigration has run rampant for many years, the black unemployment rate stands at 14.9% compared to 6.8% for Hispanics in 2005. Additionally, 28.6% of Miami's African American population lives in poverty compared to 16.8% of Hispanics.

In 1853, Frederick Douglass stated that, "every hour sees the black man elbowed out of employment by some newly arrived emigrant, whose hunger and whose color are thought to give him a better title to the place." This was said in response to the white European

immigrants that pushed blacks out of many blue-collar occupations such as cooks, house servants, porters, brick layers, stewards, etc. Today, the African American community stands on the threshold of history repeating itself as Hispanic immigrants take the positions formerly dominated by blacks.

The direct employment threat of immediate amnesty for 12 million illegal immigrants to African Americans is that this population often competes with the black community for the same jobs. A majority of the employed African American population are mostly high school graduates and dropouts who often work in low-skill, low wage jobs. Hispanic immigrants are now increasingly taking these jobs.

Traditionally, the black community has accepted the Hispanic immigrant population due to our leaning towards humanitarianism. Because we are a discriminated people who have lived in oppression in the United States and have been historically treated as being less than American citizens, we often feel sympathy for other minority races facing challenges. However, the time has come for African Americans to realize that the amnesty of 12 million immigrants will cause job opportunities for own families and communities to shrink.

Now is the time for African Americans to pay attention to the Immigration Bill now being debated in Congress. Historically, the black community has often been cited at the bottom of barrel in a myriad of statistics. If we don't pay proper time and attention to this Immigration Bill, the African American community can be relegated to a permanent underclass in the American Society.

