

Migrant Civil Society and the Metropolitcs of Belonging

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Abstract

This paper examines the shifting landscape of immigration politics in the United States, with a focus on how municipal governments and civil-society organizations have sought to meet the challenges that attend to the growing immigrant populations in urban areas. The paper begins by considering what recent patterns of migration to urban areas have meant for the demographic composition of cities and suburbs, before turning to the question of how the climate of immigration politics impacts the context of immigrant reception and the processes of immigrant incorporation. The paper then explores the characteristics and activities of “migrant civil society,” both as a political force and as a service provider in urban areas. It concludes with a review of policies and programs that have been adopted by municipalities, often at the urging or in partnership with immigrant-serving organizations, with the goal of facilitating immigrant social, economic, civic, and political incorporation.

Introduction: New Urban Landscapes of Migration

In July 2014, President Barack Obama conceded that efforts to enact comprehensive immigration reform had failed, marking the fourth time in eight years that a congressional impasse prevented significant reforms to the nation’s immigration system. Reforming immigration laws is a federal matter. The US Supreme Court has repeatedly affirmed the federal government’s plenary authority, granting sole power to the legislative and executive branches to regulate all aspects of immigration.

But despite clear directives from the Court, there are signs that the locus of immigration policymaking might be changing. Increasingly, state and local governments are enacting a variety of immigration and immigration-related policies. At one end of the political spectrum is a set of local policies aimed at immigrant incorporation. These policies establish programs to expand access to public services, such as legal aide, employment assistance, and social services, or they otherwise seek to regularize the status of immigrants through measures such as municipal identification cards. The objectives of these policies include promoting social cohesion and improving health, employment, education, and public safety outcomes for residents.

At the other end of the spectrum are policies with overtly restrictionist objectives. They seek to deny unauthorized immigrants access to public services, such as education and healthcare; penalize landlords who rent housing to and employers who hire undocumented immigrants; and institute English-only laws governing municipal affairs. Some laws have gone so far as to criminalize first-responders, social workers, staff of community organizations, and members of the general public who knowingly provide assistance to

undocumented immigrants. Many of these laws have been found to be unconstitutional and have been struck down in federal court. But these court rulings have not stanching the spread of “illegal immigration relief acts,” as they are commonly known. Model legislation has moved from jurisdiction to jurisdiction, covering all regions of the country.

The congressional impasse on immigration reform has not meant that the federal government has been inactive in this policy domain. Deportation figures have climbed, surpassing the two million mark under the Obama presidency; the number of border patrol agents has never been higher; the Secure Communities and 287(g) programs have enlisted local police in immigration enforcement; and, in a development that the Obama administration has characterized as a humanitarian crisis, more than 50,000 youth have been apprehended crossing the Mexico-US border in just a four-month period in 2014, leading the administration to pursue expedited deportations of minors. Immigrant communities have responded to these developments by escalating their political engagement, including mass demonstrations, civil disobedience, litigation, consumer boycotts, legislative advocacy, media campaigns, and community organizing. These activities have, at times, been incorrectly described by journalists as “spontaneous” bursts of dissent, thereby inadvertently underplaying the foundational role that a range of civil society actors have played in laying the groundwork for social activism, scripting political narratives, mobilizing popular sentiments, and galvanizing public support (see Betancur and Garcia, 2011; Cordero-Guzman et al., 2008; Gupta, 2006; Nicholls, 2014; Pallares and Flores-Gonzalez, 2010). Community organizations, particularly those that have been established by immigrants, are now a major political force in the United States, articulating the interests of a growing immigrant population.

This paper examines the shifting landscapes of immigration politics in the United States, with a focus on how municipal governments and civil-society organizations have sought to meet the challenges that attend to the growing immigrant populations in urban areas. New urban landscapes of migration are made at the intersection of four meso-level dynamics: (1) migration flows, which can alter the demographic composition of a local populace; (2) the nature of the political climate within municipalities, including the partisan leanings of the electorate, which can profoundly shape the local context of migrant reception; (3) the structure of economy, particularly its industrial and occupational make-up, which shapes labor demand and affects working conditions; and (4) the characteristics of a city’s civil society, which can both act as a local political force that affects policy outcomes and as a service provider that can help immigrants manage their everyday needs. The paper begins by examining recent patterns of migration to urban areas and what they have meant for the demographic composition of cities and suburbs. The second section briefly considers the contested local politics of immigration reform in light of the federal government’s repeated failure to enact comprehensive immigration reform legislation. Advocates and opponents of stricter immigration laws increasingly contend that the local scale is where opportunities are greatest for resolving many of the problems resulting from the nation’s “broken immigration system.” However, local immigration politics has been no less polarized than at the national level, and municipalities have adopted diametrically opposed stances to immigration issues. Moreover, in many respects, the local political climate determines the field of play for immigrant groups; will these organizations be required to

adopt a defensive stance against punitive policies, or is there scope to pursue innovative initiatives to enhance immigrant incorporation? The third section explores the maturation of “migrant civil society,” both as a political force and as a service provider. Civil society organizations have stepped into the fray of contentious immigration politics, advocating for more inclusive policies at the federal, state and local levels. The final section summarizes some of the key policies and programs that have been adopted by cities, often at the urging, or in partnership with, immigrant-serving organizations, with the goal of facilitating immigrant social, economic, civic, and political incorporation.

Immigrant Gateways, New and Old

Migration to the United States has been increasing steadily since the 1970s, rising sharply during the 1990s and into the 2000s (Figure 1). It has been estimated that in 2012, approximately 40.8 million immigrants resided in the US, representing 13 percent of the total population. Approximately 11.7 million of these immigrants are in the country without authorization, a figure that is slightly below its peak of 12.2 million in 2007 (Passel et al., 2013).

[Figure 1 about here]

As dramatic as these figures are, they do not reveal the complexity of the demographic shifts that have occurred. Migration flows have always been geographically uneven, and the unprecedented wave of migration that occurred in the 1990s and 2000s was no exception. Currently, more than two-thirds of immigrants (Singer, 2004) and fully 60 percent of unauthorized immigrants (Passel et al., 2013) reside in just six states: California, Florida, Illinois, New Jersey, New York, and Texas. However, during the 1990s, the share of the nation’s immigrants living in those states declined for the very first time (Singer, 2004). In large part due to booming job markets outside traditional port-of-entry cities, new gateway cities emerged as key destinations for recent immigrants. The resulting pattern of migration is now more diverse, both in terms of the metropolitan areas in which immigrants have settled and the communities within those metropolitan areas where they now live. This section will explore each of these dimensions in turn.

Audrey Singer (2004) has developed a useful typology of gateway cities that places immigrant ports-of-entry in historical context (Figure 2). *Former gateways* like Buffalo, Cleveland, and Milwaukee were important destinations for immigrants in the early years of the twentieth century but have seen little foreign migration in the last 70 years. *Continuous gateways*, like Chicago, New York, and San Francisco, witnessed large migration flows in the early 1900s and again after 1970. Having experienced modest levels foreign immigration in the early part of the century, *post-World War Two gateways* like Los Angeles, Houston, and Miami became major immigrant destinations after 1970. *Emerging gateways* like Atlanta, Dallas, and Las Vegas saw their immigrant populations rise sharply after 1990. *Re-emerging gateways* like Denver, San Jose, and Seattle were home to large numbers of immigrants in the early 1900s, then saw their share of foreign-born population decline throughout much the century, before experiencing large-scale in-migration after 1990. And

finally, *pre-emerging gateways* like Austin, Charlotte, and Salt Lake City had small immigrant populations in 1980 but then experienced rapid in-migration in the 1990s.

[Figure 2 about here]

Turning now to the changing residential location of immigrants within metropolitan areas, Manuel Pastor (2011) has critiqued the contemporary relevance of the “spatial assimilation model” that has guided scholarship on immigrant settlement patterns for decades. With roots in the urbanization theories of the Chicago School, the predominant model of spatialized assimilation posited that immigrant households would initially locate in disadvantaged areas of central cities. As these households experienced upward economic mobility, they would relocate from these immigrant enclaves to more prosperous neighborhoods and then to suburban areas. This model appears to have been fairly well suited to the waves of European migration of the early and mid twentieth century. But, as Pastor argues, federal immigration policy changes disrupted immigrant settlement patterns. In particular, the 1986 Immigration Reform and Control Act, which granted amnesty to undocumented immigrants, provided new opportunities for residential mobility. Immigrants responded by moving to states, such as Georgia, North Carolina, and Nevada, where job opportunities were abundant.¹ Likewise, formerly undocumented immigrants could bypass the traditional port-of-entry neighborhoods of central cities and move to suburban locales in search of jobs and better-quality, lower-cost accommodation. Pastor notes, however, that amnesty did not allow for unfettered movement among immigrants, and especially nonwhite immigrants. Discrimination in housing markets led the new residential locations to be stratified by race, nationality, and class, leading to immigrant-population clustering in some cities and suburbs while other areas received few, if any, recent migrants.

For immigrants, there are at least two potential benefits to the increased, though still constrained, geographic dispersion of foreign-born populations. The first is economic. Because recent migrants tend to cluster in a relatively small number of industries and occupations, economic competition can be reduced through geographic dispersal. The second is political. Pastor (2011: 345) has argued that “in some ‘new’ places ... there is less deep-rooted and historic hostility to immigrants, and this can make immigrant integration a less politically explosive topic.” Of course, the reverse can hold as well; some of the cities with the most virulent anti-immigrant politics have experienced only modest flows of in-migrants in recent years. But there are other drawbacks as well. In an era of dwindling government support for human services—cutbacks in social assistance, job training, and housing assistance, especially for immigrants—community organizations have come to play an increasing role in helping households manage the vagaries of urban life. In areas where immigrant population growth has been more recent, this sector may be ill equipped to meet the needs of specific immigrant populations (Joassart-Marcelli, 2013).

The context of reception for recent immigrants is significant for a host of reasons. It shapes immigrants’ opportunity structures in terms of employment, health, education, and civic life, and therefore it directly influences their quality of life over the short and long term. Equally important, as Michael Jones-Correa (2005: 90-91) has written,

Urban areas provide immigrants' first sustained experience of government and its institutions in America—its role in policing, housing, health care, education, and the job market. These impressions are formative and lasting. Participation in a local context provides immigrants with the tools and skills of citizenship that lead to the management of their relationships with their neighbors—and that serve as a gateway into participation in the larger national polity.

For reasons that will be elaborated more fully later in this paper, cities' histories of migration can strongly influence the character of local immigration politics, as well as the conditions of reception encountered by immigrants. Where migration flows have been long established, it is common for a robust set of pro-immigrant civil-society actors to occupy a prominent place in local politics and civic life, and to have developed organizational capacities for meeting the service-delivery needs of immigrant populations. Conversely, where large migration flows have been more recent, local civil society may be underdeveloped, and immigrants' interests may have less influence on the tenor of local politics. In these cities, the context of reception—and immigrants' first sustained experience of government and its institutions in the United States—may be prove unwelcoming, and even hostile.

Rescaling Immigration Policy: Spaces of Restriction, Spaces of Incorporation

State and municipal government responses to immigration, it must be said, have been as polarized as the immigration reform debate itself. In 2010, the State of Arizona became, in some quarters, the standard bearer for nonfederal immigration policymaking while at the same time it was widely vilified for its spate of restrictionist policies, many of which ultimately were ruled unconstitutional. Arizona moved to adopt new laws that criminalize undocumented immigrants while expanding the role of state and local police in the enforcement of immigration laws. For policymakers in more than two-dozen states, it became a legislative model (Lacayo, 2011). However, while it justifiably received the most scrutiny, Arizona was just one of hundreds of states and localities that have enacted immigration-related laws in recent years, an indication that in the absence of comprehensive immigration reform, the locus of immigration policymaking has shifted to the state and local levels.

Since at least the late 1880s, the federal government's plenary power over immigration policy has been reaffirmed through cases that have tested the limits of governmental authority over immigration matters (Varsanyi 2010). The courts have found numerous state and local immigration laws to be in violation of the Constitution since these sub-federal initiatives are preempted by the federal government's plenary power, and because many of these laws violate individuals' civil rights and civil liberties. However, although the Supreme Court and lower courts have consistently reaffirmed the federal government's exclusive authority over immigration policy, state and local governments are not prevented from enacting legislation that pertains to immigrants and to immigrant incorporation. This crucial distinction—between immigration policy and immigrant affairs—has emboldened lawmakers to test the limits of sub-federal authority and to pursue immigration-related legislation and locally scaled immigration policy.

According to the National Conference of State Legislatures (2012, 2013), immigration-related matters have recently been an area of concerted state-level legislative activity. In 2010, for example, every state legislature that was in regular session considered bills pertaining to immigrants and/or immigration, and in the period 2007 to 2012, more than 8,300 immigration-related bills were introduced in state legislatures across the country. Many of these bills could be classified as pro-immigrant, such as bills that expand health and education programs for immigrants and their children. But anti-immigrant reforms are being pursued with increasing vigor (Hincapié, 2009; Varsanyi, 2010; Walker and Leitner, 2011). State and local governments have enacted numerous “illegal immigration relief acts” that seek, among other things, to impose penalties on landlords who rent living quarters to unauthorized immigrants and on employers who hire undocumented workers. Surprisingly, perhaps, “the *restrictionist* responses of local governments to undocumented immigration are largely unrelated to demographic pressures in terms of increases in the number of recent immigrants or the proportion of Spanish-speaking households (Ramakrishnan and Wong, 2010: 89, emphasis in original). Instead, these local responses are more strongly associated with political partisanship and community activism (such as protests and rallies), with the former offering the greatest explanatory power in statistical models. So while a number of new immigration gateways have emerged since the 1990s, restrictionist measures are not typically pursued by those municipalities; instead, the immigration backlash often occurs in places that have seen more modest levels of immigration.

Illegal immigration relief acts are the policy expression of the attrition strategy, the notion that if policymakers are able to make life sufficiently miserable for undocumented immigrants they will “self-deport.” According to proponents, the attrition strategy is premised on the idea that,

By deterring the settlement of new illegals, by increasing deportations to the extent possible, and, most importantly, by increasing the number of illegals already here who *give up and deport themselves*, the United States can bring about an annual decrease in the illegal-alien population.... The point, in other words, is not merely to curtail illegal immigration, but rather to bring about a steady reduction in the total number of illegal immigrants who are living in the United States. The result would be a shrinking of the illegal population to a manageable nuisance, rather than today’s looming crisis (Krikorian, 2005: 1, emphasis added; see also Kobach, 2008; Vaughan, 2006).

The attrition strategy seeks to enlist unauthorized immigrants in their own removal from the United States. Having failed to forge an effective political coalition at the federal level capable of enacting their preferred legislative proposals, restrictionists have resorted to immigration reform by stealth through their attempts to materially degrade conditions of everyday life for immigrants through state and local legislation and administrative procedures. This rescaling of immigration control has been accompanied by a new politics of immigration at the state and local levels.

But even taken on its own terms, the attrition strategy is a failed public policy. Many of the recently enacted laws that have been inspired by notions of “attrition through enforcement” (as the strategy is also called) have been ruled unconstitutional by US courts. In addition, studies of migration flows from several states where the attrition strategy has been most prominent show little evidence of out-migration of unauthorized immigrants (Filindra, 2012). However, illegal immigration relief acts and other restrictionist measures clearly have had an impact on community life, and these impacts are felt well beyond the jurisdictions where restrictionist policies have been enacted. These policies have contributed to rising levels of fear and mistrust in immigrant communities nationwide, including fears of law enforcement authorities, public officials, and public institutions (Waslin, 2012; Theodore, 2013; Menjívar, 2014). In this context, civil society, and in particular community-based organizations, faith-based groups, and advocacy coalitions, take on special importance in the lives of immigrants, serving as trusted allies that provide collective resources to help immigrants navigate hostile environments.

Immigrant rights groups have been active participants in the contested federal, state and local politics of immigration reform. In areas where restrictionist policies have been adopted, these organizations have lobbied to overturn these policies, challenged anti-immigrant laws in court, and helped immigrants contend with the everyday challenges these laws pose. In areas that have been more welcoming to immigrants, a range of civil society actors, such as community-based organizations, faith-based groups, labor unions, and advocacy organizations have partnered with state and municipal governments to deliver services, design programs, and strengthen protections for immigrants.

The Coming Age of Migrant Civil Society

With the increase in immigration to the United States over the past several decades, many community organizations modified their programmatic foci to better serve recent arrivals (Cordero-Guzman, 2005), while countless new organizations have been established specifically to address the challenges faced by a growing immigrant population. Building on the work of scholars studying the civil-society organizational forms being created by migrants (Fox and Rivera-Salgado, 2004, 2005; Bada, Fox, and Selee, 2006), Theodore and Martin (2007) argued that a distinct segment of civil society had emerged through these efforts. This “migrant civil society”—community organizations, social movements, hometown associations, churches and faith-based organizations, social clubs, and other organized groups that represent the interests of migrants and operate between markets, households, and the state—plays an increasingly important role in mediating the myriad dislocations and conflicts brought about by mass migration. The organizations and social actors that comprise migrant civil society share a number of unifying characteristics: (1) their mission directs them to address the social, economic, and political concerns that are crucial to the well-being of immigrants; (2) they engage in a range of activities (such as citizenship classes and immigrant rights advocacy) that are dedicated to immigrants’ needs and concerns; and (3) a substantial share of their clients and constituents are immigrants and their families. In addition, many of these organizations have been established by immigrants themselves, and immigrants often take on a central role in agenda setting, programming, and matters of governance.

Although migrant civil society organizations share many features with broader civil society, they remain distinctive in that many of their core activities are framed in terms of the wellbeing of immigrant populations. Issues such as citizenship and naturalization; redressing workplace abuses suffered by undocumented migrants; restoring the social safety net for noncitizens; and engaging in transnational activities, such as development projects abroad, charitable giving, and cultural exchanges have come to define the work of these organizations (Bada, 2014; Martin, 2012; Joassart-Marcelli, 2013; Smith and Bakker, 2008). Furthermore, because migrant civil society actors represent the concerns of immigrants to society at large, the various entities that constitute migrant civil society can usefully be conceptualized as a unique political force, one that has exhibited the ability to act collectively to voice constituents' concerns. In addition to forging political alliances, many of these organizations have stepped into the void created by the withdrawal of public services to immigrants that has occurred in many cities by providing emergency services, housing assistance, job training programs, and otherwise assisting immigrants who are in need.

At the local level, these organizations are now a platform for political mobilization, making policy claims, delivering social services, and offering alternative visions of urban development and community life. Moreover, at a time when flows of undocumented immigrants represent a significant share of total migration to the United States, migrant civil society provides a mechanism for “political incorporation without citizenship” (Theodore and Martin, 2007). Undocumented migrants residing in the US are formally excluded from electoral politics. Yet, through their civil society representatives, their concerns can be articulated and brought into public policy debates and civic life (Chung, 2005; Gupta, 2006; Wong, 2006). Civil society organizations, unlike undocumented immigrants, are typically seen as having standing and legitimacy to make claims on the state. These organizations have come to occupy a central place in the contentious politics of immigration reform, affordable housing, workers' rights, access to education, the availability of healthcare, and other pressing social issues. It can be argued that immigrants' political activity through migrant civil society has now supplanted electoral politics and participation in political parties as the principal means of immigrant political incorporation (see Wong, 2006).

Migrant civil society is a broad field that encompasses organizations of varying political orientations. Some might be characterized as assimilationist, focusing their efforts on the social, cultural and linguistic integration of immigrant populations. Others take a more confrontational stance, advancing notions of social citizenship that call into question conventional definitions of national citizenship based in sovereign territories. Still others explicitly avoid framing their goals and activities in terms of citizenship rights, focusing instead on universal human rights. Similar debates have been occurring within academia. Helga Leitner and Christopher Strunk (2014: 350) provide a reasoned synopsis of these differing intellectual currents, the terrain of which is worthy of summarizing given its resonance with the approaches taken by some prominent immigrant-rights advocates.

Some scholars have been highly critical of deploying conceptions of citizenship to

theorize and make meaningful the political activities and demands of immigrants and their allies. It is argued that even an expanded conception of citizenship is too limiting because it reinforces citizenship as the foremost measure of belonging. [...] Although acknowledging these dangers associated with the concept of citizenship, we disagree that this necessitates abandoning the concept of citizenship altogether. To the contrary, we suggest that an expanded, agentic conception of citizenship, which dislodges citizenship as located and conferred by the nation-state, offers other insights and solutions.

Leitner and Struck (Ibid.) propose the concept of “insurgent citizenship” to describe “discourses and practices that challenge existing laws, policies, and institutions; promote alternative criteria for membership in a polity; and lay claims to and enact new forms of citizenship and rights. Insurgent citizenship moves the focus toward individual practices and organized collective actions.” This might include collective action to improve conditions in low-wage industries, struggles to expand access to education, health and social services, and efforts to challenge landlords who maintain substandard properties in immigrant port-of-entry neighborhoods, as well as “everyday acts of resistance” that restore a measure of autonomy and dignity to urban life. The remainder of this section examines efforts by migrant civil society to intervene in three arenas: workplace issues; social services and antipoverty programs; and municipal policies.

Workplace issues

Undocumented migrants comprise a substantial share of the workforce in agricultural production, manufacturing, construction, and the hospitality sector (Passel and Cohn, 2009), and they increasingly have become the “workers of choice” for employers seeking to hire employees at below-market rates of pay (Peck and Theodore 2001; Doussard, 2013). As a result, many immigrants enter urban economies through precarious jobs in low-wage industries and the informal economy, where they endure routine violations of labor and employment laws, including the nonpayment of wages, violations of minimum wage and overtime laws, exposure to hazardous working conditions, and employer retaliation against workers who attempt to exercise their rights in the workplace (Bernhardt et al., 2008).

In response to these conditions, immigrant rights groups have established worker centers as an intervention into exploitative niches of local economies (Fine, 2006; Martin, 2012; Martin et al., 2007; United Worker Congress, 2014). Worker centers are labor market intermediaries that assist workers in redressing wage theft, conduct workers’ rights education, provide workforce development services, and otherwise give immigrant workers greater leverage in the job market. Increasingly, worker centers are entering into partnerships with government agencies that enforce labor standards, and they have been valuable partners in efforts to improve conditions in low-wage industries (Fine and Gordon, 2010). Worker centers also collaborate with other allies in the labor movement to organize workers, press for stronger enforcement of labor standards, and advocate for policies that will improve employment conditions, including advocating for comprehensive immigration reform (Milkman, 2006; Milkman and Ott, 2014).

Social services and antipoverty programs

Immigrant-serving nonprofit organizations administer a wide range of social services and antipoverty programs for their constituents. These include, childcare and early childhood education; health screening and counseling; housing counseling; job-search assistance; assistance accessing public benefits; financial literacy courses; programming for senior citizens; and emergency food and housing services. However, a series of public policy decisions has eroded the social services resources available to many immigrants. The 1996 Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act, which reformed the US welfare system, eliminated most federal programs for immigrants and devolved responsibility for setting eligibility criteria to states. Many immigrants and their families lost access to cash-transfer programs, food stamps, and health insurance, a move that was motivated by perceived fiscal savings and the desire on the part of policymakers to shift responsibility for support onto immigrants' sponsors who, under the Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act of 1996, must pledge to assist immigrants until they become naturalized citizens (Fix et al., 2011).

Restrictions on immigrant eligibility for assistance coincided with the large-scale devolution of social programs, and the rise of nonprofit organizations as an unevenly developed “shadow state” that assumes increasing responsibilities for meeting the needs of low-income households (Wolch, 1990). Variations in sector capacities, owing to disparities in funding allocations by the state, as well as capabilities within the sector itself (e.g., leadership, financial support, or other resources), can result in unmet needs, particularly in areas, such as suburbs and new gateway cities, where migrant civil society is underdeveloped. There is a danger that greater reliance on nonprofit organizations might entrench inequities in access to services given the geographical unevenness—spatial mismatch might be a more apt term—of organizations' service-delivery areas (Joassart-Marcelli, 2013). Furthermore, in locales where anti-immigrant sentiments are intense, political tensions may arise over resource allocations for immigrant services. Because devolved service delivery relies on public funding, in some parts of the country there may be little political will to support antipoverty programming for immigrants, and as a result the nonprofit sector will struggle to meet the demand for services.

Municipal policies

Cities that are experiencing dramatic increases in immigration confront significant cultural, political, social, and economic changes associated with large-scale demographic shifts. The following programs are examples of the types of immigrant-incorporation initiatives municipalities have pursued, often at the urging of, or in collaboration with, migrant civil society.

Legal defense to unauthorized immigrants. The New York Immigrant Family Unity Project (NYIFUP) is the first such program in the nation to provide legal defense to low-income immigrants facing deportation. The NYIFUP is founded on the premise that a lack of legal safeguards denies immigrants due process under the law, while a lack of legal representation “leads to detentions that continue for months or years longer than necessary

and deportations of New Yorkers who have viable legal claims to remain in the communities they call home” (Center for Popular Democracy et al., 2014, p. 5). A coalition of immigrants’ rights organizations estimates substantial savings to governments (primarily through reductions in healthcare and foster care costs) and employers (through decreased costs of employee turnover) from such a program, while also injecting a measure of fairness into proceedings to determine legal residency in the US (Ibid., pp. 9-15).

Municipal identification cards. In 2007, New Haven, Connecticut authorized the issuance of the Elm City Resident Card, the first municipal identification card in the US. The municipal ID is intended to enable undocumented immigrant residents of the city, as well as other residents who might lack appropriate identification, to open bank accounts and make use of municipal services, such as public libraries (Holtz, 2007). Similar policies have been enacted in San Francisco, Oakland, New York City, and several other cities.

Community policing and immigrant outreach programs. Recognizing that immigrants may be disproportionately the victims of crimes, a number of cities have created programs to strengthen relationships between local police departments and immigrant communities. These programs help to allay concerns that undocumented immigrants may have should they report crimes to authorities, expand language access for the police to enable officers to communicate to non-English speakers, and otherwise remove barriers between law enforcement authorities and the communities they serve (Gambetta and Gedrimaite, 2010). El Paso has created a Victims Services Unit that conducts legal-rights education and outreach to immigrant communities, and the local police department does not require victims to reveal their immigration status. Durham has created a Victims Assistance Office and a Spanish-language neighborhood watch program, and the local police department has increased the number of Spanish-speaking personnel on staff. Seattle has created a number of councils that advise the police department on public safety issues affecting various immigrant groups, religious minorities, racial groups, and others that might face particular public-safety challenges. The advisory councils identify public safety issues, help build trust between communities and law enforcement authorities, ensure that police officers are culturally competent.

Senior services. Fremont has created the Community Ambassadors Program for Seniors, a partnership between the Human Services Department and ten local cultural and faith-based organizations. The program provides support to seniors in their native languages and according to their own cultural norms. Ambassadors serve as a liaison between the city’s social services and seniors’ religious and cultural communities.

Community development. Fort Wayne’s Community Development, Planning & Policy Department has a Hispanic and Immigrant Liaison that provides assistance for accessing city services and is involved in community development planning projects. The position is part of a wider effort in the city to promote immigrant naturalization as well as civic participation among the local Burmese and Latino communities.

Financial Services. San Francisco launched the Bank On San Francisco initiative in 2006 to expand access for the “unbanked” to mainstream financial services. Participating banks

and credit unions allow individuals with no or poor banking history to start low-fee accounts, and gain access to financial counseling, college savings accounts and responsible payday loans. The Mexican Matricula and Guatemalan Consular ID cards are accepted as primary identification. Similar programs have been created in Dallas, Fresno, Memphis, Shreveport, and dozens of other cities.

Migrant civil society intervenes in urban life at the intersection of major societal trends towards increasing immigration, polarizing politics, and the devolution of responsibilities for human needs to lower tiers of government and onto communities, organizations and households. In some respects, migrant civil society can be regarded as the “last line of defense” for immigrant populations that otherwise would have few avenues through which to advocate for their interests. Problems of substandard jobs, inadequate housing, and other social ills disproportionately are borne by immigrants, and in particular undocumented immigrants and recent arrivals. Migrant civil society has been an indispensable resource for these immigrants as they adjust to life in the United States. The more searching questions, however, concern whether it is appropriate for a segment of civil society to bear so much of the responsibility for these social problems? Often underfunded and with their capacities stretched, migrant civil society organizations at best provide a patchwork approach to social assistance, leaving large populations underserved, particularly those in areas of the country where the backlash against immigrants has been strongest.

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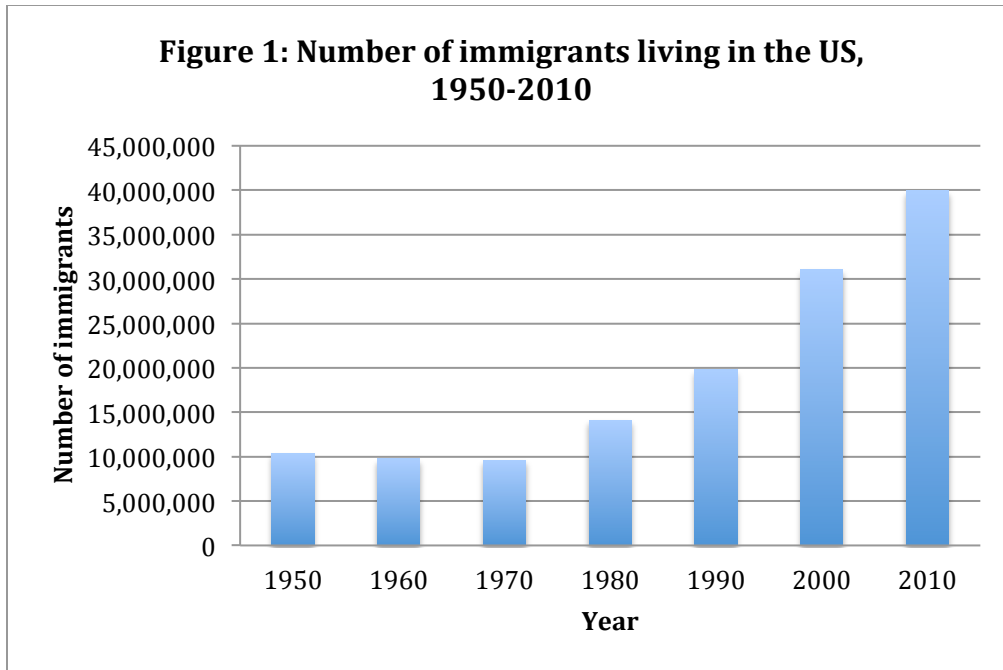
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Source: Migration Policy Institute tabulation of data from the U.S. Census Bureau's 2012, 2011, and 2010 American Community Surveys and 1970, 1990, and 2000 decennial Census data. All other data are from Campbell J. Gibson and Emily Lennon, U.S. Census Bureau, Working Paper No. 29, *Historical Census Statistics on the Foreign-Born Population of the United States: 1850 to 1990*, U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, DC, 1999.

Figure 2: A Typology of Migrant Gateway Metropolitan Areas

Former	Continuous	Post-World War II	Emerging	Re-emerging	Pre-emerging
Baltimore Buffalo Cleveland Detroit Milwaukee Philadelphia Pittsburgh St. Louis	Bergen-Passaic Boston Chicago Jersey City Middlesex- Somerset- Hunterdon Nassau-Suffolk New York Newark San Francisco	Fort Lauderdale Houston Los Angeles Miami Orange County Riverside- San Bernardino San Diego	Atlanta Dallas Fort Worth Las Vegas Orlando Washington, DC West Palm Beach	Denver Minneapolis- St. Paul Oakland Phoenix Portland, OR Sacramento San Jose Seattle Tampa	Austin Charlotte Greensboro- Winston-Salem Raleigh-Durham Salt Lake City

Former: Above national average in percentage foreign-born 1900–1930, followed by percentages below the national average in every decade through 2000

Continuous: Above-average percentage foreign-born for every decade, 1900–2000

Post-World War II: Low percentage foreign-born until after 1950, followed by percentages higher than the national average for remainder of century

Emerging: Very low percentage foreign-born until 1970, followed by a high proportions in the post-1980 period

Re-Emerging: Similar pattern to continuous gateways: Foreign-born percentage exceeds national average 1900–1930, lags it after 1930, then increases rapidly after 1980

Pre-Emerging: Very low percentages of foreign-born for the entire 20th century

Source: Singer 2004.

ⁱ There is evidence that immigrants' levels of residential relocation may have slowed during the Great Recession (Ellis et al. 2014), perhaps leading to the emergence of new settlement patterns.