

Winter 2023 U.S. Immigration Alert!

A Newsletter from National Immigrant Solidarity Network
Winter 2023 Issue, Volume 85ikyh
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Breaking his campaign promise – amid a migrant crisis, Biden to build new section of racist border wall!

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8/18: Lee Siu Hin Solidarity Greetings from China!

YouTube Link: <https://youtu.be/bykdUuOkR2o>

I just returned to China to begin my China-US activist solidarity working trip 2023.

We had organized several major projects in China at the first half-year of 2023; include: China delegation, documentary project "Vaccine and Sanctions" and Xinjiang fact-finding trip.

5/21: U.S. Activist Delegation Visit Xinjiang Tortai Farm Near Kashgar
<https://youtu.be/DnASCUAYdIM>

Photo Gallery: 5/13-31, 2023 U.S. Activist Delegation to China, and Fact-Finding Mission to Xinjiang
<https://youtu.be/UgJ4VZua8kY>

Vaccine and Sanctions 疫苗与制裁 A Documentary (2023/2/16)
<https://youtu.be/pgfnO5Q7Q8U>

Vacunas y Sanciones -Vaccine and Sanctions Un documental de producción conjunta China-EE.UU
<https://youtu.be/4OgtUwT49m4>

Lee Siu Hin
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National Immigrant Solidarity Network www.ImmigrantSolidarity.org
China-US Solidarity Network www.ChinaSolidarity.org

10/5: Biden to build new section of border wall

The administration has revealed plans to construct more barriers – breaking the president’s campaign promise – amid a migrant crisis

Russia Today

Joe Biden’s administration has abandoned the president’s campaign pledge against building any more barriers on the US-Mexico border, saying it will construct a new section of the controversial wall started by predecessor Donald Trump to help stem the heavy flow of illegal aliens into the country.

“There is presently an acute and immediate need to construct physical barriers and roads in the vicinity of the border of the United States in order to prevent unlawful entries into the United States in the project areas,” Homeland Security Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas said on Wednesday in a public filing.

The need is so acute, in fact, that the administration will waive dozens of federal laws and regulations to fast-track the project, which will be built in Starr County, Texas, Mayorkas conceded. The area is experiencing “high illegal entry” by migrants into the US, he added. Starr County is in a sector of the Rio Grande Valley where Border Patrol officers encountered more than 245,000 illegal aliens trying to cross into the US between last October and August.

The decision comes amid a border crisis that has spread from the southern US states to such Democrat-run cities as New York and Chicago. New York Mayor Eric Adams warned last month that the influx of illegal aliens “will destroy New York City.”

Biden’s Democrat allies have long favored lax border policies, touting their communities as “sanctuary cities,” but with the crisis now hitting home as illegal aliens are bused to their areas, the mood has shifted. Illinois Governor J.B. Pritzker said on Tuesday that the pace of migrant arrivals has created an “untenable situation.”

Biden pledged during his 2020 campaign for the presidency that he wouldn’t allow any more border barriers to be built in the US. Speaking to a group of black and Hispanic reporters just three months before the election, he vowed, “There will not be another foot of wall constructed on my administration, No. 1.”

On his first day in office, he issued an executive order revoking the emergency declaration that former President Trump had used to divert defense funds for wall construction. He called border barriers a “waste of money that diverts attention from genuine threats to our homeland security.”

Trump, who is polling as the leading Republican candidate to face Biden in the 2024 presidential election, mocked his successor for changing course on the border wall. “So interesting to watch Crooked Joe Biden break every environmental law in the book to prove that I was right when I built 560 miles . . . of brand new, beautiful border wall,” Trump said on Thursday in a Truth Social post. He added, “Will Joe Biden apologize to me and America for taking so long to get moving and allowing our country to be flooded with 15 million illegal immigrants, from places unknown? I will await his apology.”

Border funding approved by Congress during the Trump era will be used to pay for the new wall project. The funding would have expired if the money wasn’t spent during the government’s current fiscal year.

10/21: Illegal crossings on US-Mexico border hit new record – officials

Fiscal year 2023 was the biggest year for illegal immigration on record, the agency found

Russia Today

US Customs and Border Protection (CBP) apprehended a record 269,735 illegal immigrants along the US-Mexico border in September, the agency confirmed in a report on Saturday. The total exceeds the previous record set in May 2022.

Fiscal year 2023 also set an all-time record for illegal immigration into the US, with 2.47 million recorded migrant encounters exceeding even 2022’s record-setting 2.3 million, according to government figures.

A total of 169 migrants stopped by CBP were listed on the US’ Terrorist Screening Dataset in 2023, nearly twice as many as the previous year. Fentanyl seizures at the border nearly doubled, from 14,600 pounds (around 6,600kg) to 27,000 (just over 12,000kg). Some 15,267 “criminal noncitizens” were stopped in total.

In addition to the record amount of illegal immigration, CBP processed about 43,000 asylum-seekers in 2023 via the cellphone app it rolled out in January with the intention of speeding up the application process. Another 240,000 new arrivals hailing from Venezuela, Cuba, Nicaragua, and Haiti crossed the border legally this year under US President Joe Biden's new "parole" system, established last year to streamline the arrival of migrants fleeing countries whose governments Washington considers unfriendly.

Migrant encounters finally began to decline in the first two weeks of October, according to CBP, which reported a 20% decline over this period. The Department of Homeland Security and Immigration and Customs Enforcement have also stepped up removals of failed asylum seekers and other unauthorized individuals in recent months, with over 300,000 people shown the door since May.

In Saturday's report, CBP included a "simple" message addressed to "anyone who is thinking of entering the United States illegally along the southwest border," warning: "Don't do it. When noncitizens cross the border unlawfully, they put their lives in peril." Agents claimed to have rescued 4,633 migrants "in distress" in September alone, a 44% increase over the previous month.

Critics have accused the Biden administration of maintaining an open-borders policy, blaming its reversal of predecessor Donald Trump's immigration crackdown for an unprecedented 16% uptick in the number of foreign nationals illegally living in the country.

So-called "sanctuary cities" such as New York that previously swore off enforcing immigration laws have floundered under the increased burden of tens of thousands of new arrivals being deposited on their doorstep by the bus- or planeload. Meanwhile, the Republican governors of border states already overrun by illegals demand the federal government address the issue.

However, local governments' pleas for help from the Biden administration have gone largely unanswered, forcing hundreds of cities, towns, and even states to declare emergencies over the sprawling humanitarian crisis unfolding in their streets.

8/29: 'There is slavery in the fields of North Carolina'

There is an unbroken line from the economic conditions developed to protect chattel slavery to the legal structures that allow for the abuse and exploitation of migrant farmworkers today

Tina Vásquez - Prism

I'll never forget something that advocate and former farmworker Leticia Zavala said to me during an interview.

"There is slavery in the fields of North Carolina."

She said it almost in passing, as part of a larger laundry list of abusive and deadly conditions experienced by farmworkers in the state as part of the H-2A Temporary Agricultural Program, a guest worker program overseen by the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL) that allows American employers to temporarily hire migrant workers to perform agricultural work. A whopping 90% of these workers hail from Mexico. This is not surprising, given that the H-2A program is an iteration of the Bracero Program, a bilateral agreement with Mexico that, from 1942 to 1964, allowed for the temporary entry of millions of migrants to perform agricultural labor in the U.S. The program was ultimately abolished because of systemic wage theft, abuse, and exploitation. Lee G. Williams, the DOL official in charge at the time, described the Bracero Program as "legalized slavery."

As a farmworker organizer, Zavala sees it all: the toll that backbreaking and dangerous agricultural labor takes on workers, the substandard and unhealthy living conditions they are forced to endure, the labor trafficking, starvation, and the all-too-common stolen wages. And there's also the "modern-day slavery." Along with other preferred euphemisms used in agriculture—forced labor, involuntary servitude, and indentured servitude—"modern-day slavery" simply means slavery that is happening now, today, the results of which can be found in the produce aisles of countless American grocery stores.

Government officials, elected leaders, and American employers regularly downplay the depth and breadth of abuse in agriculture. When pushed, the powerful often cite a number of complicated reasons the standards in agriculture remain low and yet somehow seemingly impossible to enforce. But the reason why slavery persists is not hard to explain or understand: In the U.S., there is a direct and unbroken line from the economic conditions developed to protect chattel slavery to the legal structures that allow for the abuse and exploitation of migrant farmworkers today.

Plantation slavery shaped American agriculture, meaning the industry was shaped by the white ruling class's creation of racial divides and hierarchies to maximize profits. When slavery was abolished in 1865, the machinery of white supremacy continued in full force. The sharecropping tenant system that followed the Civil War was slavery by another name. Black families were forced into massive debt to live in the same homes, work on the same land, and make a profit for the same people who previously enslaved them.

During the New Deal era, when laws changed to create labor protections for workers, agricultural and domestic labor became proxies for race. White Southern legislators fought to exclude Black workers from receiving benefits and protections because their Southern political economy relied on their subordination. President Franklin D. Roosevelt's New Deal legislation enshrined racial discrimination into law by creating occupational and geographic classifications that excluded agricultural and domestic jobs performed by Black people, denying them minimum wage and overtime provisions. Agricultural workers were also excluded from the National Labor Relations Act, making it almost impossible for them to organize and collectively bargain.

These racist exclusions remain intact and ever-present in our agricultural economy, which continues to rely on a racialized workforce. At the start of World War I, American employers began turning to Mexican workers to fill the agricultural labor void. Soon, the Bracero Program birthed the H-2A program. The Latinos who now form the backbone of our agricultural industry—including the undocumented immigrants who make up a majority of the workforce—are still excluded from federal protections. This includes the right to unionize. Less than 1% of the nation's least powerful, most exploited workforce belong to a union.

The deplorable and dangerous conditions we see in agriculture are baked into the industry and labor laws—and the consequences are dire. Farmworkers forced into slavery is a common enough phenomenon that the worker-based human rights organization the Coalition of Immokalee Workers (CIW) has an anti-slavery program that helps uncover, investigate, and assist in prosecuting agricultural slavery operations. Laura Germino, a founding member of the CIW who helped establish the CIW's Anti-Slavery Campaign, has noted that modern-day slavery cases “don't happen in a vacuum.”

“They only occur in degraded labor environments, ones that are fundamentally, systematically exploit[at]ive,” Germino said. “In industries where the labor force is conti[n]gent, day-haul, with sub-poverty wages, no benefits, no right to overtime, no fight to organize—that's where you see slavery taking root.”

Slavery in the H-2A program is far too common, and few cases garner the same level of attention and headlines as Georgia's shocking Operation Blooming Onion. According to the federal indictment, migrants from Mexico and Central America were forced to dig for onions with their bare hands under the threat of gun violence, earning just 20 cents for each bucket harvested. At least two people died from heat exposure on the job, and one woman was repeatedly raped. One of the victims' labor camps was surrounded by electric fencing, and they were otherwise held in cramped and unsanitary mobile homes with raw sewage leaks and no access to food or safe drinking water.

It's no secret that the H-2A program has long been a vehicle for human trafficking and slavery. Last year, it was barely a blip on the news radar when Florida labor contractor Bladimir Moreno was sentenced to 10 years in prison for using the H-2A program to traffick Mexican workers into the U.S. to perform “forced labor.” The produce from enslaved workers was sold by major chains like Walmart, Kroger, and Sam's Club.

But exploitation and abuse should not have to rise to the level of slavery to garner attention. Routinely across the U.S. there is news of another farmworker death or another lawsuit filed on behalf of workers who were trafficked and forced to live in deplorable conditions. Farmworkers, advocates, attorneys, and other experts have spent decades sounding the alarm—providing evidence, recommendations, reports, and testimony. They have hoped against hope that those in power will actually listen and adopt commonsense recommendations that would help alleviate the egregious abuse and exploitation that are all too common in the agricultural industry.

Why do we allow these conditions to persist? Because the “success” of our agricultural industry hinges on the subordination of agricultural workers. Advances made by labor organizers, migrant workers, Black-led economic justice efforts, and progressive politicians are thwarted by powerful agricultural and business lobbies hell bent on returning to systems of mass exploitation and harm. When an entire industry is built to maximize profits on the backs of a racialized workforce, the U.S. will always choose capitalism—no matter the cost.

8/18: Documents show Taiwan working with FBI to prosecute Chinese Americans, Intimidate U.S. politicians

Mint Press

Amid a controversial visit from Vice President William Lai (the front-runner to be his country's next leader), official documents reviewed by "MintPress News" show that the Taiwanese government is attempting to drum up anti-China hostility, influence and intimidate American politicians and is even working with the FBI and other agencies to spy on and prosecute Chinese American citizens.

Key points of this investigation

- Taiwanese officials are monitoring Chinese Americans and passing intelligence to the FBI in attempts to have them prosecuted.
- Taiwan is working with "friends" in media and politics to create a culture of fear towards China and Chinese people in the US
- Taiwanese officials claim they are "directing" and "guiding" certain US politicians.
- Taiwan is monitoring and helping to intimidate U.S. politicians they deem to be too pro-China.
- The island is spending millions funding US think tanks that inject pro-Taiwan and anti-China talking points into American politics.

WORKING WITH THE FEDS TO PROSECUTE CHINESE AMERICANS

Vice President Lai's journey to the United States is, officially, only a stopover on his way to Paraguay (the U.S. does not formally recognize Taiwan as an independent state). He is scheduled to make appearances in both New York and San Francisco.

Lai himself is an outspoken leader of the growing movement for Taiwanese independence. Many nationalists see Taiwan as culturally different from the mainland and argue it would be better off as a fully independent state. To achieve this goal, they are attempting to gain American backing and influence American public opinion. China, however, sees the matter as purely internal, and American attempts to wrest Taiwan out of its orbit as a potential trigger for World War Three.

Part of the effort to influence American politics, the cables reveal, is waging a silent war against pro-Chinese groups and directly working and sharing intelligence with the FBI and other agencies. "We should grasp the opportunity to counteract and further weaken China's grassroots influence activities in the U.S. through adopting more offensive and lethal measures," a cable from Taiwan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA) reads. The same document instructs all offices of the Taipei Economic and Cultural Representative Office (TECRO or TECO) – Taiwan's de facto U.S. embassy and consulates – to cooperate with local law enforcement.

8/17: Federal District Court Refuses to Halt Florida's Discriminatory Housing Law

Plaintiffs Vow to Appeal Ruling

Case: Shen v. Simpson

Affiliate: ACLU of Florida

August 17, 2023

A federal district court judge today refused to preliminarily block SB 264, an unconstitutional Florida law banning many Chinese immigrants, including people here as professors, students, employees, and scientists, from buying a home in large swaths of the state. As a result, SB 264 remains in effect.

The American Civil Liberties Union, ACLU of Florida, DeHeng Law Offices PC, the Asian American Legal Defense and Education Fund (AALDEF), and the law firm Quinn Emanuel are representing four Chinese immigrants who live, work, study, and raise families in Florida, but are prohibited under SB 264 from buying a home, as well as Multi-Choice Realty, a local real estate firm whose business is harmed by the law.

The ruling issued today addressed the plaintiffs' request for emergency relief and does not resolve the underlying legal arguments brought in the case.

“This law is hurting immigrants who are trying to build lives in Florida,” said Jian Song, owner of Multi-Choice Realty LLC. “As a Chinese American who has called Orlando my home for over 20 years, I’ve been extremely worried since this law went into effect.”

Under SB 264, people who are not U.S. citizens or permanent residents, and whose “domicile,” or permanent home, is in China, are prohibited from purchasing property, including homes, in Florida. The sole exception is narrow: People with non-tourist visas or who have been granted asylum may purchase one residential property under two acres that is not within five miles of any “military installation.” This term is vaguely defined in the law, but there are at least 21 large military bases in Florida, many of them within five miles of cities like Orlando, Miami, and Tampa — putting many major residential and economically-important areas completely off-limits.

A similar but less restrictive rule also applies to many immigrants from Cuba, Venezuela, Iran, North Korea, Russia, and Syria. But the law singles out people from China for especially draconian restrictions and harsher criminal penalties. “While today’s decision is disheartening, our clients will continue to fight for their rights to equality and fairness on appeal,” said Ashley Gorski, senior staff attorney at ACLU’s National Security Project. “Florida’s law legitimizes and expands housing discrimination, in violation of both the Constitution and the Fair Housing Act.”

“Today’s ruling heavily relies on a decision from the Supreme Court in 1923, a time when Asian immigrants were not allowed to become citizens, own land, or vote,” said Clay Zhu, Managing Partner of DeHeng Law Offices PC. “We shall not go back.” In the early 20th century, politicians used similar justifications to pass “alien land laws” in California and more than a dozen other states, prohibiting Chinese and Japanese immigrants from becoming landowners. These racist policies severely restricted economic opportunities for immigrants and exacerbated discrimination against Asian communities in the United States, before eventually being overturned in the courts and by state legislatures. Florida was one of the last states to repeal its “alien land law” in 2018.

“Our community will continue to fight against Florida’s unjust and racist law,” said Bethany Li, legal director at the Asian American Legal Defense and Education Fund. “These types of laws use false stereotypes about Asian Americans as perpetual foreigners and have repeatedly harmed our community — from the Chinese Exclusion Act, to the Japanese Americans’ incarceration during World War II, and the surveillance of South Asians in the post-9/11 period.”

“We are disappointed by today’s decision, and believe it fails to account for our clients’ constitutional and statutory rights,” said Derek Shaffer, partner at Quinn Emanuel. “In our view, which the U.S. Government has supported as an amicus, people from China should be no less welcome in Florida than they are elsewhere in the United States and free to participate in the housing market on equal footing with everyone else. Recognizing that this decision decides only our request for a preliminary injunction, we look forward to continuing this litigation and to seeking recourse on appeal.”

8/25: Response to “Spinning illusions: The anti-American left and the Ukraine war” – a new McCarthyism

Workers World

Recently, articles have appeared on the front page of the New York Times that smear Code Pink, The People’s Forum and TriContinental for allegedly taking money from an alleged Chinese agent. After the Times article was published, Senator Marco Rubio issued a statement calling for an investigation of the people mentioned in the article.

Another article using similar McCarthyite tactics, by Lawrence S. Wittner, appeared in CounterPunch, Foreign Policy in Focus and The Daily Kos. Each is considered a “progressive” publication. This attack uses the 1950s language of the House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC). Wittner’s attack is titled: “Spinning Illusions: The Anti-American Left and the Ukraine War” and targets the United National Antiwar Coalition (UNAC), International Action Center (IAC), Code Pink and The Peace in Ukraine Coalition. Wittner calls UNAC and IAC “campists” and “anti-American.”

These attacks are designed to silence critics of the U.S. government in the midst of an escalating U.S./NATO war in Ukraine and as the U.S. continues its aggression towards another nuclear power, China.

We must stop this new Cold War and this move back to McCarthyism. We must not be silent.

Lawrence S. Wittner’s article, “Spinning illusions: The anti-American left and the Ukraine war” is a throwback to McCarthyism, replacing analysis with name-calling. It attacks the United National Antiwar Coalition (UNAC), naming Sara Flounders, an organizer of UNAC and the International Action Center. Also attacked are Ukraine Solidarity Network and Code Pink,

accusing all of us of being “campists.” This is an old term, a slur, against those who dare to take sides in the international class struggle.

The article’s title accuses those named as being “The Anti-American Left.” Sounds like Wittner is resurrecting HUAC — the House Un-American Activities Committee that destroyed people’s lives in the 1950s and early 1960s simply for what they thought and said.

Other evidence that the U.S. government is headed toward McCarthyism is the indictments of leaders of the Black is Back Coalition for their opposition to NATO’s role in Ukraine — charging them with “distributing Russian propaganda.”

The New York Times, a media conglomerate that gives propaganda support to each U.S. war — remember Judith Miller’s hack job on Iraq building up to the 2003 invasion — published a front-page article insinuating that Code Pink, The People’s Forum and Tricontinental are agents of China. Why? Because these groups campaign to say: “No to a New Cold War.”

This article’s signers support this campaign 100%. Senator Marco Rubio has called for the Department of Justice to investigate these antiwar activists. Wittner’s article comes across as another desperate effort to silence opposition as the U.S. and NATO march closer to war with Russia and China.

Wittner wrote, “Sara Flounders, a leader of the International Action Center and the United National Antiwar Coalition, two of the largest campist organizations in the United States, lovingly depicted a recent BRICS [Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa] summit as devoted to ‘building an open world economy that ... promotes cooperation.’

“She [Flounders] contrasted this with a summit of the Group of Seven (Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, Britain, and the United States) — ‘the countries responsible for the looting and colonization of Asia, Africa, and the Americas. They owe reparations for the genocide of Indigenous peoples, the enslavement of African people, and the devastating world wars of the 20th century.’

“Naturally, ‘this summit of the most powerful and wealthiest imperialist powers was focused on how to intensify sanctions on Russia and how to continue the war in Ukraine.’ Behind them stood NATO, ‘the U.S.-commanded military alliance that serves as a global enforcer of U.S. corporate power.’”

Flounders stands behind what she wrote. Completely.

Wittner uses polls, Congressional votes and U.N. votes — all promoted by U.S. power — to claim support for the current U.S./NATO war in Ukraine. Similar “evidence” was utilized to justify U.S. wars in Korea, Vietnam, Iraq, Afghanistan, Yugoslavia and Libya. Support evaporated as the wars dragged on. Already a CNN poll (Aug. 4) confirms the majority of the U.S. population is opposed to additional funding to Ukraine. But Biden is demanding another \$24 billion for the Kiev government.

Wittner writes that we “focused criticism on the U.S. government, NATO and Ukraine.” Yes! We in UNAC do focus our work on stopping U.S. wars. For example, we explain that NATO is a U.S.-commanded, U.S.-equipped military alliance. NATO trainers, advisers and equipment have been deployed in Ukraine since a U.S.-supported coup in Kiev in 2014 overthrew the elected Ukrainian government.

Through NATO, Washington built up the small Ukrainian military to be bigger than nearly any of the NATO member countries. It is Washington that pushed NATO expansion to the borders of Russia after the fall of the Soviet Union. For what purpose? According to numerous official U.S. statements and articles, it was to destroy Russia. But if we say this, we are falsely accused of being controlled by Russia or China.

What we are. What we need.

UNAC is an antiwar coalition based in the U.S., and asserts it is the U.S. that has been responsible for most of the military aggressions since WWII. This is still the only country to use nuclear weapons and still threatens to use them.

Millions of lives were lost in past U.S. wars. Trillions of dollars, with bipartisan support, go directly to U.S. military contractors — a steady stream of guaranteed profits. When those who want social services observe that the United States is the only industrialized country without free medical care and free university education, and with crumbling infrastructure and millions of people who are unhoused and desperate, they should consider this waste of wealth. Shouldn’t we address these burning issues?

The world needs an antiwar movement willing to consistently speak out and mobilize opposition among poor and working people when it is most difficult and unpopular to resist the endless U.S. wars. In the U.S., we need to oppose the devastating

impact of 800 U.S. military bases around the world and a military budget 40% of the world's total. We need to address the illegal and inhumane U.S. sanctions on 40 countries, comprising a third of the world population.

But most important is that we need an antiwar movement that always links these endless U.S. wars to the war here at home. The racist repression, the world's largest prison population and three police killings every day, and widening attacks on migrants, LGBTQ2S+ people and others are the outgrowth of U.S. wars. We are determined to continue to oppose U.S. wars and demand that the hundreds of billions of dollars of the military budget that benefits corporate power in the U.S. be spent on people's needs.

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About National Immigrant Solidarity Network

NISN is a coalition of community, immigrant, labor, human rights and student activist groups, founded in 2002 in response to the urgent needs for the national coalition to fight immigrant bashing, support immigrant rights, no to the sweatshops exploitation and end to the racism on the community. Please visit our website:
<http://www.ImmigrantSolidarity.org>

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