

***Perspectives:***  
***Research Notes and News***

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Highlighting proceedings of the Spring 2004  
WGGP Symposium on

**GENDER AND HUMAN SECURITY:  
LATINA/O IMMIGRANTS IN THE  
MIDWEST**  
March 17-18, 2004

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Globalization is changing the face of small towns and rural communities in the United States as immigrants from developing countries increasingly settle in these areas. Illinois is the fifth largest recipient state for immigrants and by far the largest destination in the Midwest (see map on next page). Immigrants comprise about 13-15% of the population in Illinois. Most come from Latin America, particularly Mexico. Women make up 45% of Latino immigrants and 51% of Asian immigrants, and yet in most studies of the Midwest, they are still invisible. The Women and Gender in Global Perspectives (WGGP) Program at the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign is coordinating an interdisciplinary study that examines the challenges presented by these changing demographic patterns for health-care support, housing, income security and education policies – areas that are critical to human security. As part of this project, we held a symposium at UIUC in March, 2004: *Gender and Human Security: Latina/o Immigrants in the Midwest* (supported by the Chancellor's Initiatives and cosponsors). The symposium brought together specialists to explore research, community activism, and policy initiatives related to immigration, gender and human security issues in Illinois. This special issue of the WGGP research notes and news publication, *Perspectives*, is based on presentations and discussion at the symposium. The papers represent a wide variety of views, which we hope will aid the understanding of the complex issues of immigration and

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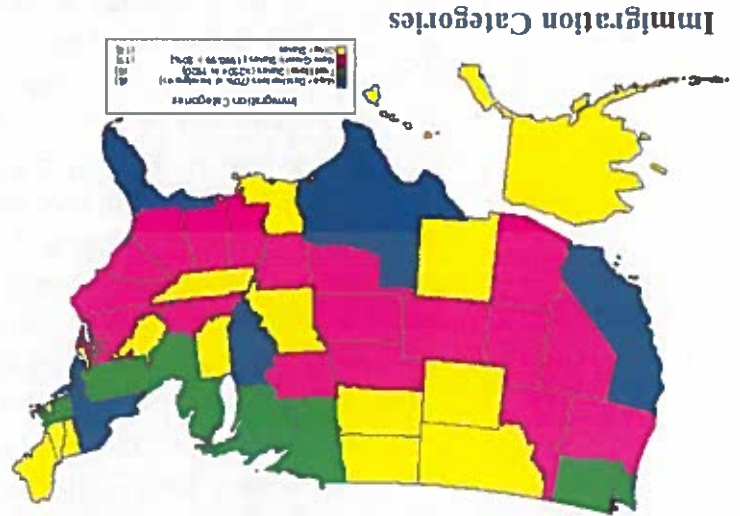
*Gale Summerfield*

**Introduction  
to the Special Issue on Gender  
and Human Security of Latina/o  
Immigrants in the Midwest**

community adjustment. Some authors address gender issues directly while others present general problems. Overall, however, all contribute to our long-run goals of enhancing life in rural communities and promoting individual and family resiliency.

### Immigration Patterns in the U.S.

Source: U.S. Census 2000



- (6) Major Destinations (70% of immigrants)
- (8) Traditional States (>250K in 1920)
- (19) New Growth States (1990-99 > 50%)
- (18) Other States

**Gender and Human Security:  
Latina/o Immigrants in the Midwest  
Women and Gender in Global Perspectives Symposium  
March 17-18, 2004**

**Introduction to the Symposium  
-Excerpts-**

*Chancellor Nancy Cantor*

*University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign*

We find ourselves, at this moment, in the richest nation in the world, in a state so vast and wealthy it has been called "the Inland Empire." So it is probably worth remembering, as we begin our discussions, what Robert Kennedy had to say about such wealth in a speech he made 26 years ago today at the University of Kansas at Lawrence:

Our gross national product does not allow for the health of our children, the quality of their education, or the joy of their play. It does not include the beauty of our poetry or the strength of our marriages, the intelligence of our public debate or the integrity of our public officials. It measures neither our wit nor our courage, neither our wisdom nor our learning, neither our compassion nor our devotion to our country; it measures everything, in short, except that which makes life worthwhile.

The proceedings from this symposium on Gender and Human Security: Latina/o Immigrants in the Midwest address the issues that make life worth living: education, income security, housing, and health care. In a study done by the Institute for

Latino Studies at the University of Notre Dame, education, children, and youth were more important even than immigration concerns among Latinos living in the Chicago suburbs of Cicero and Berwyn, where Latino populations have risen 166 percent and 475 percent, respectively, since the year 1990. Metropolitan Chicago ranks second only to Los Angeles as a destination for legal Mexican immigration; its population has grown by 67% to nearly 1.4 million since the 1990 census. More than half of this community lives in the suburbs. The Census Bureau predicts that Latinos will double their numbers by the year 2025, when one in six residents of this state will be Latino. Latino communities have many things going for them. Their strong work ethic and their low unemployment rates mean that local employers rely heavily on them. Latino business owners are highly visible and active, and the Catholic church is an important community ally. Family members live near each other and support each other. Still, they face many challenges, which are considered in the following reports. In Berwyn and Cicero, the Notre Dame study found that only 52 percent of Latino adults had finished high school, compared to 86 percent of non-Latinos. Latino incomes were lower: between 1996 and 2000, Latinos earned 66 cents for every dollar earned by non-Latinos. And almost half of Latinos lacked health insurance. Roughly half were not U.S. citizens. This has a serious impact on their political representation. The WCGP Symposium gives us a chance to share experiences and discuss gender differences in needs for research, policy and programs at the state level. We hope this opportunity will help build networks of scholars, community activists and policy-makers working on issues of gender and immigration in the Midwest. Universities are exciting places, where we can learn from each other, exchange ideas, see things from someone else's point of view, change our minds, change our lives,



and change the world. Let us continue working together to examine what makes life worthwhile—and what makes life impossible—for that sector of our society which traditionally has been both its bedrock and its great hope for the future.



Religion is increasingly moving beyond private confines to public venues where it challenges and informs public morality and civil society. In the United States, during the last twenty years or so, we have witnessed the Christian Right's assertive attempts to create and preserve socially conservative policies regarding abortion, sexuality, and marriage. More progressive faith-based mobilization efforts have received relatively less attention in the public eye—in fact, most of us never hear about these. One site where more progressive faith-based organizing has occurred is in the debate over U.S. immigration and border policies. Since the inauguration of Operation Gatekeeper in 1994, the United States has pursued an aggressive, militaristic border enforcement policy at the U.S.-Mexico border. Bolstered by big increases in government expenditures, the number of Border Patrol agents has ballooned to 11,000 and they now regularly use electronic ground sensors, stadium lights, military helicopters outfitted with radar, and night-vision scopes to police the border. A walled zone has led to a war zone where violence and deaths prevail. Smuggling rings and fees have skyrocketed, the violations of civil rights and legal rights have increased, and migrants now attempt to cross at increasingly dangerous points in the mountains and deserts. Many of them die of dehydration and hyperthermia; conservative estimates are that between one and two people die daily in their attempt to cross. My research on faith-based responses to this situation is co-authored with several students at the University of Southern California (Genelle Gaudinez, Hector Lara and Billie Ortiz), and

**“There’s a Spirit that Transcends the Border”:  
Religion and Postnational Protest at the**

**U.S.-Mexico Border**

*Pierrette Hondagneu-Sotelo*

University of Southern California

is forthcoming in *Sociological Perspectives*. The *Posada Sin Fronteras* is an annual political and religious-informed event that calls attention to the rising death toll at the U.S.-Mexico border caused by changes in U.S. border enforcement policies. It's based on a Mexican Catholic procession and re-enactment of Mary and Joseph looking for shelter in Bethlehem. The organizers of the annual bi-national *Posada Sin Fronteras* claim that U.S. border policies are today denying shelter and hospitality to Mexican and Central American migrants who come north looking for shelter. Through ethnographic observations, and on-the-spot interviews with 47 participants at the event, we analyze the *Posada* as a collective ritual, and examine the meanings it holds for its varied participants. It's a multi-racial, multi-denominational event that brings together whites and Latinos, participants from the U.S. and the Mexican side of the fence, and Christians, Catholics and secular folks. While the white Christians and Mexican Catholics draw different meanings from their participation in the event, they express unity in their struggle against the border policies that are killing people. Religion and ethnicity are powerful sources for drawing diverse groups to collective actions, and we conclude that multi-vocality of meaning and resistance is perhaps more powerful than a resistance based on heterogeneity. Social science scholars of social movements, many of us who enter the picture with strong secular biases of our own, would be wise to consider some of the "spaces of hope" created by faith-based responses to policies that negate basic human rights.

# The Significance of Gender in Explaining the Effects of Migration on Mexican Child Health

*Katharine M. Donato, Rice University*

*Melissa Stainback*

*Caitlin Clare Rosenthal*

*Shawn Malia Kanataupuni*

Although most prior studies have not examined differential investments in boys and girls as a consequence of migration, there are several reasons to do so. First, immigrant families have become increasingly prominent in contemporary U.S. society. Approximately 20 percent of U.S. children, and 48 percent of U.S. born Latino children, have at least one foreign born parent (Hernandez and Charley 1998; Jamieson et al. 2001). Second, most immigrants originate from societies that value boys more than girls, where parents may selectively discriminate against girls (Mensch et al. 1998; Muhuri and Preston 1991; Das Gupta 1987; Waldron 1987; D'Souza and Chen 1980). Third, migration—especially from Mexico to the United States—may change this pattern because it is a complex, large-scale process in which social, economic, and cultural factors influence families. One consequence is that parental investments in children may differ for immigrant vs. non-immigrant families, and for immigrant families post-migration vs. before (Fuligni and Yoshikawa 2002). Migration may influence parental investments in children in several ways. Because the gender rules embedded in Mexican families loosen with migration, immigrant parents may be more likely than nonimmigrant parents in Mexico to make gender equitable investments in their children's health. Mexican mothers in the United States may be especially diligent about insuring gender health equity because their social position vis a vis men is no longer marginalized from most (if not all) of the privileged areas in which men participated in Mexico, e.g.,

paid employment, household decision making, and membership in migrant organizations (Goldring 2002). Migration may also affect parental investments in their children because it is a selective process whereby only the healthiest migrate (Weeks et al. 1999; Landale et al. 2000). Therefore, children of migrant parents may face lower risks of poor health compared to those with nonmigrant, less healthy parents. Although we know little about whether and how culturally sanctioned gender rules are imposed by Mexican parents after migration, effects of migration on children's health will depend on the extent to which gender-specific practices toward children are offset by pressures toward child equity and selection of the healthy to migrate. Using new binational data from Mexico and the United States, we examine gender differences in the effects of migration on children's health for three types of Mexican families: those currently migrating and living in the United States, those who returned to Mexico, and those with no U.S. experience. The data offer an excellent opportunity to examine these groups because they permit a measure of household migration that incorporates country of residence and time spent in the United States. Understanding migration status in this way advances the literature because it permits comparisons of current migrants and nonmigrants to return migrants, a group who has received little attention in prior studies but may be especially important for children's health given that the propensity to return among Mexican migrants is quite high.<sup>1</sup> Our interest in the differential effects of migration on the health of boys and girls was motivated by the paradoxical health outcomes of Mexican children in the United States, coupled with evidence that parental investments differ for boys and girls in developing nations, that the process of Mexico-U.S. migration shifts the gendered landscape in families, and that immigrant families emphasize gender equity to insure their children's success. The paradoxical better health of Mexicans is especially puzzling in light of their low socioeconomic status in the United States.

In this paper, we investigated how migration affected the health of Mexican boys and girls, and found that gender differences in the effects of migration remained robust even after controlling for many potential mediators. In U.S. households where parents had at least five years of experience, both girls and boys had better health than their nonmigrant counterparts in Mexico, but girls benefited more than boys. In contrast, girls living in Mexican households with 1-4 years of prior U.S. experience had worse health than their female counterparts in nonmigrant households, and than boys. The risks of poor health were also related to differing effects for age. Older girls were especially penalized for their age, compared to those less than two, whereas older boys experienced no negative consequences of growing older. These gender differences bode serious consequences of migration for the health of young Mexican and Mexican American children. Explaining these effects is less straightforward than their description, however. On the one hand, the results may provide some support for the interpretation that the migration experience shifts gender norms in ways to encourage immigrant families to make gender equitable investments in their children's health. But it is also possible that the benefits that girls and boys receive in U.S. households with considerable migrant experience derive from the selective migration of healthy parents to the United States.

#### Notes

<sup>1</sup>New estimates suggest that, in the 1990s, one out of two Mexican migrants returned after 15 years in the United States (Riosmena 2003). This represents a decline from highs of 75 to 90 percent for return migration in the 1980s (Massey et al. 2002).





**Gender and Health Capabilities of Immigrants  
in the Midwest: Notes from a Study of Latino/o  
Immigrants in Small Towns in Illinois**

*Gale Summerfeld, Manisha Desai, Mary Arends-Kuennig,  
Jocelyn Armstrong, Stacy Harwood, Faranak Mirafshad,  
Paola Leon, Lauren Tobey, and Maria Silva<sup>1</sup>  
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*A mother is called to the hospital. When she arrives,  
she sees her teen-aged son has a deep cut in his head. She can't  
understand what the doctor is telling her, and her son can't play his  
usual role as interpreter... A man hurts his arm at work. It might be  
broken, but he refuses to go to the hospital. He fears they will call  
the authorities to deport him... A woman takes her daughter, who  
is running a high fever, to the doctor's office. The girl was born  
in the U.S. and is covered by KidCare insurance. The doctor will  
not accept her as a patient. In fact, no doctor at the main health  
services in the town will accept KidCare patients. Only a small  
clinic will take them, and they wait over four hours to be seen.*

These are daily occurrences for thousands of new  
immigrants in the Midwest who are increasingly settling in non-  
metropolitan areas. The immigrants who come to rural areas  
and small cities of Illinois are usually not farmers but often are  
engaged in working for the agro-foods industry and in food  
service work. Agricultural field workers in central Illinois are  
usually internal migrants who live the rest of the year in Texas  
rather than those crossing the border from Mexico. Meatpacking  
has been a common field of work for immigrants in the Midwest  
in recent years, and Cass County in central Illinois had over 1,000  
percent growth of Latino immigrant residents between 1990  
and 2000 largely because of new jobs at a pork processing plant

(U.S. Census 2000). Meatpacking is not, however, the only area of employment in central Illinois. A study in two small towns in Iroquois County found that most immigrants were working in jobs with more comfortable working conditions; this contributed to better integration into the towns. Social support networks, such as those centered around the church, are important in the daily life of rural immigrants (Sofranko and Mueller, 1999). Our preliminary investigations indicate that the gender patterns for Mexican immigrants to the U.S. noted by Cerutti and Massey (2001) are common in rural Illinois. Latino men often immigrate on their own and frequently have wives and children in their home country. Although more women have been moving on their own in recent years (especially to large cities such as Chicago), Latinas usually arrive with their husbands or to join other family members when they migrate to the small towns and rural communities in this area. Women are almost half of the recent immigrants to central Illinois; they comprised 42 percent of the Latinos in Champaign County in 2000. Although jobs and unification with family members are the primary reasons that new immigrants from Mexico come to central Illinois (as in more traditional areas), it may be more appropriate to consider these goals as proxies for the larger goals of increasing their own and their family's capabilities; they actually seek a wide range of opportunities, including employment and family ties but also stressing educational opportunities for their children, security, and a better quality of life. They maintain ties to their home countries, and transnational motherhood (with at least one child outside the U.S.) is not uncommon. As travel back to their home countries becomes harder in the post-9/11 environment, they are putting down deeper roots in the U.S. In addition to the new immigrants directly from Mexico and other countries, a proportion of those in rural Illinois first moved to Chicago and then moved to the less traditional areas of central Illinois to get away from crime, gangs, drugs, the high

cost of housing, and the intensity of the city. The immigrants in central Illinois are typically less well educated and earn lower incomes than those who go to metropolitan areas (PUMS 2003). Health insurance is a problem throughout the U.S., but lack of coverage is especially pressing in rural communities. Studies have shown that Latinos are less likely than other residents in rural Illinois to have insurance (Straub and McNamara, 2001). New immigrants are less likely than other Latinos to have coverage, and the unauthorized are usually not eligible for services except in the case of emergency care in hospitals and prenatal care. Most of the men and women in our focus groups did not have insurance. Those who live in the city of Champaign usually go to a local clinic that has Spanish-speaking staff. For emergencies, they may go to the hospital, but language is a problem and unauthorized immigrants fear that immigration officials will be notified. The women noted that some of the children had insurance because they were born in the U.S. Most try to take preventive care to avoid illness because in addition to lack of access to health care, an illness means missed work and therefore missed income. Some of them received medicines from Mexico. The women use health care services more than the men and mentioned that they had access to additional health care programs when pregnant. Unauthorized immigrants cannot get driver's licenses or car insurance, but many of them drive anyway because public transportation is not available. They often travel to nearby towns for services. For all of the immigrants contacted, health care issues were linked to the need to learn English, have a good job and ability to get a driver's license.

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#### Notes

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groups and interviews and processing this material: Paola Leon,

Marta Silva, Suzi Wilson, Lauren Tobey and Amel Medina. In

addition Sue Feldman from ECIRMAC has helped with focus

groups and interviews in Rantoul where we are also working

with the Community Center, Rape Crisis Services, and other

groups.

# Notes on Human Security Focus Groups in Champaign County

*Paola Leon*

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For the project on gender and human security of immigrants in the Midwest, three focus groups were conducted in Champaign County in Illinois last year; two of them with women and one with men. I will report some of the findings from the focus group starting with the women's groups. The participants were between the ages of 18-50 with 1 to 3 children each. Eight women were from the town of Puebla in Mexico. The women have been in the United States for less than 10 years and in the Champaign-Urbana area for 5 years or less. Four major themes were discussed in the focus groups: health care, child care, access to driver's license, and the lack of English as a Second Language classes. Health care - only one of the participants had health care through her employer. A percentage of her paycheck was kept by the employer for this purpose, and if she needed to go to the doctor she had to pay, submit the bill to her employer and wait for a reimbursement. Thus, she prefers to go to the doctor only in emergencies. All of the women identified Frances Nelson Health Center, a clinic located in Champaign, as their main health care provider. Some of them suggested that there were no other choices since they couldn't afford any other place. The participants complained that services were not always adequate due to the high demand and the limited staff of the clinic. In case of emergency their only option was the local hospitals, which would afterwards bill them. Women in Rantoul also saw the distance as a problem. They use the Frances Nelson clinic as their care provider but it is at least 30 minutes away and a lot of them don't drive; thus sometimes they miss their appointments. And there is no public transportation from Rantoul to Champaign. Therefore, many of

these women identified a need for better health care services, especially for their children. Even though many of the children had been born in the United States and were eligible for the Kid Care program, most service providers will not accept this medical card. So, again parents are being forced to use Frances Nelson clinic for their children's health, placing an even higher demand for services on the clinic. The medical card for adults is facing the same issue; this card is given temporarily to pregnant women. Local hospitals used to accept this card but now these women only have Frances Nelson clinic as an option for pre-natal care. Another related issue identified by a service provider is the lack of female gynecologists and Spanish-speaking gynecologists. Within the focus groups there were women who were driving to Chicago to seek pre-natal care. Child care—Few places offer childcare and the need is great. The women identified the Child Care Resource Center, located in Urbana, as an economic facilitator for them to send their children to child care but they said that they couldn't find providers, especially problematic for those in Rantoul. Almost all of the participants with pre-school age children had a child on a waiting list for child care. Driver's license - Currently in the State of Illinois a social security number is needed to apply for a driver's permit. The women identified this issue as a problem for some other women in the area. They reported having seen that people who couldn't drive were constantly depending on someone else to go to the doctor or to go grocery shopping. Some of the women pointed out that it was harder for women because they had to take the children to school and go to work and sometimes both things started at almost the same time. Lack of ESL classes - All the women felt that if they knew English, regardless of whether they were documented or not, they could have better jobs. They felt that because of the demands placed on them, such as, child care and work in and out of the home, they have very little time and energy to learn English and thus are left behind. They felt that their husbands have better

opportunities to learn the language because they spend more time working out of the home. Women identified a couple of places where English classes were offered in the Champaign-Urbana area but most of the classes were offered in the morning when they were working. In Kantoul no classes were offered at all. The Men - One focus group with 5 men from the Champaign-Urbana area was conducted. The men were between the ages of 18 - 50. Three of them were married and had children. Only one of them had his family with him in the United States. The other two had their families in Mexico. They had all been in the United States less than ten years and 5 years or less in the Champaign-Urbana area. In the man's group the major themes were: obtaining a driver's license and English classes. Drivers' license: The men pointed out that they saw that the inability of some people they knew to have a driver's license was a limitation on their development. They were often forced to look for jobs where they had friends who could drive them. They had also seen people who would take the risk of driving without a driver's license and who had been stopped by the police. They saw this as a great source of stress for families. Other participants had chosen to ride a bike or walk to work. Most of them work a third shift which means that they are out very late and this has made them vulnerable to being mugged. English classes - As with the women, the men felt that learning English would allow them to find better jobs. One of the men in the group expressed that he understood a little bit but not enough to go "from the kitchen to the front" (he worked as a "preparer" at a restaurant but he wanted to be a waiter because of the tips). They felt that classes offered in the Champaign-Urbana area were mostly offered when people were working. These focus groups are part of an on-going project, and we are currently conducting a survey in the Kantoul area to delve more deeply into these issues.





## **Building Community Power for Immigrant Rights and Language Access in Health Care**

*Brooke Anderson*

*Champaign County Health Care Consumers*

Champaign County Health Care Consumers (CCHCC) is a 27-year old grassroots, consumer health advocacy organization working for health care for all. We were founded on the premise of participatory democracy and the belief that meaningful reforms in the health care system will only come with the active involvement of consumers. One of our current campaigns includes the struggle for immigrant rights in health care access. One of the greatest violations of health care as a basic

human right is the inaccessibility of the health care system for immigrants and people who speak a language other than English. Problems range from lack of access to health insurance, skyrocketing out-of-pocket expenses, barriers to accessing public benefits, and lack of language accessibility. Many health care facilities fail to provide interpreter and other language access services to the growing immigrant population in Champaign and surrounding counties. In Champaign County there are 20,000 people over the age of 5 years who do not speak English well, a total of 11.8% of our County's population (higher than the state average). It is critical that this growing population with limited English Proficiency be able to communicate with their health care providers, but unfortunately, many times they cannot. CCHCC receives frequent calls to our Hotline from patients who have been unable to get health care, received sub-standard care or suffered humiliation during care because they don't speak English. Non-English speaking patients calling the hospitals and other major clinics to ask about how to schedule an appointment have been treated rudely, made fun of, hung up on, or transferred to housekeeping or the kitchen where Spanish-speaking workers were present. If they can get an appointment, these patients have

often had either no interpreter or have been forced to use their children as interpreters about sensitive medical discussions. Concerned about these violations, CCHCC and affected consumers began a campaign for improved health care interpreter services, based on the belief that it is unacceptable to treat patients with limited English proficiency as incompetent or sub-human--not just by moral standards but also by legal dictate. The federal government and the courts have determined that the prohibition of discrimination based on national origin includes protections for people of different nationalities who do not speak English well. In health care settings, this means that providers who receive federal funding must work to ensure that patients with limited English skills have meaningful access to any program services and benefits that are offered to other patients. Our campaign is calling on local health care facilities to meet at least the minimum requirements of the Office of Civil Rights for all recipients of federal funding: 1) Provide translation services at no cost to the Limited English Proficient (LEP) individual; 2) Have written policies regarding language access services and staff who are aware of the earliest possible opportunity; 4) Systematically track LEP clients and clients' needs; 5) Identify a single individual or department charged with ensuring the provision of language-accessible services; 6) Provide written notices to clients in their primary language informing them of their right to receive interpreter services; 7) Use family and friends as translators only as a last resort and only with informed consent and never use minors to translate; 8) Ensure the availability of a sufficient number of qualified interpreters on a 24-hour basis -- including telephone services; 9) Use only qualified and trained interpreters with demonstrated proficiency in both English and the other language, knowledge of specialized terms and concepts in both languages, and the ethics of interpreting. As a first step in this campaign, we are in the process of surveying local providers about their written policies and actual practices of providing accessible care in multiple languages, and also working with consumers and local organizations to collect consumer accounts of how these policies are or are not being translated into staff practices.

## Microlending to Create Economic and Social Change

*Martisa Barrera*

*ACCION New Mexico*

Offering "micro" loans to emerging entrepreneurs, ACCION New Mexico is an independent nonprofit organization that invests in the ability of its clients to create greater economic independence for themselves, their families, and their communities. With a focus on service to entrepreneurs who experience barriers to accessing business credit from traditional institutions, ACCION New Mexico issued 425 loans in 2002, of which 90% were to low-income, minority and/or women entrepreneurs. By offering character-based business loans at fair market rates with quick turnaround times, ACCION New Mexico is bridging the "credit gap" that can prevent hardworking and visionary entrepreneurs from reaching their full potential. Since ACCION New Mexico was founded in 1994, the organization's clients have used their microloans to start or expand over 1,500 enterprises in more than 95 New Mexico communities, creating and/or supporting an estimated 2,400 jobs. Studies of ACCION New Mexico's work suggest that microlending helps entrepreneurs achieve greater economic security through outcomes such as increased income and asset levels, improved financial literacy, and a heightened sense of efficacy.

When ACCION began lending in the United States in 1991, it brought two decades of experience in Latin America to help small business owners domestically. As a result, most of those early microenterprise borrowers were Hispanic. But as this country embraces an increasingly diverse

population, ACCION is being called upon to serve clients from a variety of backgrounds and ethnicities. In 2002, ACCION hired multi-lingual loan officers that speak not just English and Spanish, but French, Chinese, Bengali and Korean, and it has tailored its marketing efforts to reach new communities, often by establishing partnerships with local immigrant organizations (ACCION International 2002 Annual Report).

While focused on bringing about greater access to capital at a local level, ACCION New Mexico, an independent member of the ACCION network of microcredit programs in 21 countries, is part of a worldwide movement to extend economic inclusion through microenterprise development. Although a financial strategy, microcredit has the potential to effect more than economic change. By placing capital in the hands of entrepreneurs previously shut out of financial markets, particularly women entrepreneurs, microcredit can catalyze lasting social change. Recognizing that the return on a microloan is much more than financial, the United Nations has declared 2005 "The International Year of Microcredit."

[Editors' Note: The following press release explains the year of microcredit.]

**United Nations Press Release  
General Assembly Greenlights Programme for  
the International Year of Microcredit 2005:  
Observance will Promote Access to Financial  
Services and Empowerment of the Poor,  
Especially Women**

United Nations, New York, 29 December, 2003 – The UN General Assembly passed a resolution last week supporting the Programme of Action for the International Year of Microcredit 2005. The Year will provide an occasion to raise awareness of the importance of microcredit and microfinance in the eradication of poverty, to share good practices and to further enhance financial sector development that supports sustainable pro-poor services in all countries. On the resolution's significance, UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan said, "The International Year of Microcredit 2005 underscores the importance of microfinance as an integral part of our collective effort to meet the Millennium Development Goals. Sustainable access to microfinance helps alleviate poverty by generating income, creating jobs, allowing children to go to school, enabling families to obtain health care, and empowering people to make the choices that best serve their needs. The stark reality is that most poor people in the world still lack access to sustainable financial services, whether it is savings, credit or insurance. The great challenge before us is to address the constraints that exclude people from full participation in the financial sector. The International Year of Microcredit offers a pivotal opportunity for the international community to engage in a shared commitment to meet this challenge. Together, we can and must build inclusive financial sectors that help people improve their lives." Recent studies show that the number of poor people worldwide who benefited from microcredit more than quadrupled

between 1997 and 2001. With demand for financial services growing rapidly, the Year of Microcredit will highlight ways to expand the reach of financial services on a sustainable basis. ...The Programme of Action recognizes that a range of financial products and services can enhance the poor's ability to increase their incomes, build assets and mitigate their vulnerability in times of economic stress. The impact of a more inclusive financial service sector is not limited merely to the receipt of loans, credit, savings, insurance, and other economic tools, but evidence shows that it contributes to the health, nutrition, food supply and educational level of recipients' families making them less susceptible to unanticipated income fluctuations. Microcredit and microfinance programs not only elevate personal assets, but go beyond the individual household level to help strengthen the fabric of local economies by investing in the productive capacity of communities, stimulating consumer activity and creating new jobs. "Microfinance is much more than simply an income generation tool," said Mark Malloch Brown, Administrator of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). "By directly empowering poor people, particularly women, it has become one of the key driving mechanisms towards meeting the Millennium Development Goals, specifically the overarching target of halving extreme poverty and hunger by 2015."

For the complete press release please access the following document:  
[www.unctd.org/english/news\\_and\\_statements/newsfiles/MicrocreditPR.pdf](http://www.unctd.org/english/news_and_statements/newsfiles/MicrocreditPR.pdf)

## Hechando Raices in the Midwest: The Struggles with Work, Housing, and Home

Maura I. Toro-Morn

*Illinois State University*

Latinos have been an important, yet until now invisible, source of labor in Illinois and most of the Midwest. In my own work, I have documented how Puerto Ricans comprised a significant component of the Post-World War II immigration to the Midwest. Puerto Rican migration to Chicago has been a complex process differentiated along race, class, and gender lines. I have documented the struggles working class and poor Puerto Ricans have faced as new immigrants in the City. Puerto Ricans faced discrimination in housing and education, among other areas. Throughout the years, Chicago has drawn (and continues to draw) its share of global immigrant labor, differentiated along race, class, and gender lines. At the turn of the twenty-first century, Chicago has important international ties, is the unquestionable hub of financial services in the Midwest, and more importantly, is connected to regional economies in significant ways. Highways 55 and 57 are important arteries that connect the flow of labor, resources, and people displaced by changing economic, housing, and labor markets in Chicago and other parts of the Midwest. Historically, Mexican immigrants, in particular, have provided Central Illinois with the much needed agricultural labor in the area. Mexican migrant laborers have planted and picked corn in the region for many years. More recently, Central Americans have joined Mexicans as the primary source of labor in the Bloomington/Normal area. The similarities between the migration of Puerto Ricans to Chicago and the new immigration wave to Central Illinois are rather striking. Social class and gender are important markers of recent immigration to Bloomington/Normal area. The area's largest

employer, State Farm, attracts a significant number of highly educated Latino immigrants. Some of them have relocated from other cities, but nevertheless adding to the social class dimensions of migration to the Twin Cities. Second and third generation children of Latino immigrants are also part of this growing white-collar labor force. The area universities (second largest employers in the area) have also attracted a share of educated and professional Latinos from the Caribbean, Central, and South America. Women comprise a significant number of this new immigration into the area. But, the bulk of Latino immigration to McLean County are mostly documented and undocumented immigrants from Mexico and Central America, predominantly Guatemala. Social class shapes access to resources and home security in profound ways. For professional and educated Latinos with access to resources and professional networks, buying a home is not a significant problem. But, for working class and working poor Latino living in the Twin Cities, affordable housing is a major problem. According to the local newspaper, the average price of a house in the Twin Cities is \$146,406. The dream of a home is not within reach for working class, poor, and undocumented Latinos in McLean County working for minimum wage or less. In fact, most working class Latinos tend to be renters. Immigration status and general perceptions of mistrust and prejudice from the dominant Anglo community also shape access to resources and interactions between immigrants and town people. Home for local Latino immigrants is also a complex process that involves connections with their homelands and local communities. In closing, in keeping with the organizing theme of the WCGP Symposium, the topic of human security (broadly defined as health care, income security, housing, and education) is indeed an issue facing Latino immigrants in the Heartland.



**Trabajando y Creciendo:  
Preliminary Findings on Low-Income Latinas  
in the Chicago Workforce**  
*Elizabeth Sweet*  
*Instituto del Progreso Latino*

More than one quarter of a million Latinas live in Chicago; the sheer strength of this growing number points to the increasing role they will play in the life and viability of Chicago's workforce. Women are frequently responsible for their family's livelihood, especially in the 25 percent of Latino families that are female-headed (statistic for 2002; US Census Bureau, 2003). Since Latinas in Chicago are more likely than other women to participate in the labor force and are more likely to work as operators, fabricators, and laborers (Puentes, 1996), the reduction in manufacturing jobs in the recent recession has a strong, negative effect on them. Nevertheless, single mothers and other Latinas are securing a living wage even in the context of the recessionary economy that is abounding with sexism, racism, and ageism. Even when compared to other women, Latinas are at a disadvantage. While non-Hispanic white women make 73 cents to each dollar of non-Hispanic white men, Latinas make only 50 cents to the dollar of non-Hispanic white men (US Census Bureau, Current Population Survey, March 2002 cited by National Committee on Pay Equity). A study evaluating Latinas, who had gone through a bilingual manufacturing bridge program, demonstrated that the older women were less likely to find a job than the younger women and when they did find work they made less money (Sweet and Benancur, 2002). Even as a growing part of the workforce, Latinas are an under-utilized and an under-invested asset for the development and recovery of our economy. The purpose of this report is to present the preliminary findings of a year-long research project that examines low-

income Latinas in the Chicago workforce, as well as propose training and education programs to promote sustainable economic opportunities. In order to document the economic empowerment needs and desires of these women as well as assess viable growth sectors, we use two phases of focus groups, labor market research, and PUMS data analysis. We then match these needs and desires with expanding segments of the economy to suggest training and educational programs to prepare women for jobs in these sectors and business development opportunities. Finally, site visits across the country to organizations that serve low-income Latinas also help to detail what other communities are doing to support Latinas and advance economic stability as well as develop a model program directory. We argue that we need to take a two-pronged approach to economic empowerment. One approach is to train women for existing jobs and the other is to create jobs through self-employment, cooperatives, and social purpose business' (Kramer, 2000, Grinker, 2003). Preliminary analysis suggests that teaching, customer service, medical technology, and the health service industry are areas for further exploration. These fields have been mentioned in focus groups as sectors of interest and growing sectors that offer career ladders to family-sustaining jobs. The data also point to the need for business and entrepreneurial training programs where women learn how to develop, run, and grow businesses. In the focus groups there is a clearly expressed desire for seed capital and training in different aspects of business ownership. Since opening small businesses is such a risky undertaking, we suggest that several social purpose businesses be established. These businesses can be incubated within community organizations in the beginning until they are able to stand alone. These businesses can also provide a space for on-the-job training as well as a place to develop business management skills.

daycare center. One of the most often mentioned desires in the focus groups is childcare careers. If a social purpose daycare center were created it could serve two goals: it would provide a training ground for those wanting to be certified as home daycare providers and open their own business and it would be a place of employment for others not interested or unable to open their own daycare. This type of economic development project would serve the entrepreneurs, workers, and also be a community asset, alleviating a severe shortage of childcare services in the Latino community. Economic development programs need to address the larger economy, not just job-training and job-creation. Low-income Latinas, like many women, require non-job support including family supports such as childcare (and sick-child care), flex time, and medical insurance. In addition, for women and their families to thrive, they also need basic services such as transportation, ongoing training, and leadership preparation. In order to truly make Chicago "the city that works", many facets of the lives of low-income Latinas need to be addressed, including the social, political, cultural, and environmental aspects. Economic development programs that neglect these features and fail to take a Latina's perspective into account can be, at best, only partially successful. The programs and projects we are promoting attempt to weave together the wisdom from lived experience of low-income Latinas with potential economic options in the context of support systems.

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## >Welcome to America: the Reality of Working and Living in the U.S.

*Deborah Hiavna*

*East Central Illinois Refugee Mutual Assistance Center*

The East Central Illinois Mutual Assistance Center (ECIRMAC), commonly called the Refugee Center, provides services not only to refugees but to any immigrants who need assistance. The Refugee Center was established in 1982, by refugees, people who had a well-founded fear of death or imprisonment if they returned home, to help refugees and asylees make a successful resettlement in East Central Illinois. In the past five years the agency has expanded its clientele to include immigrants who have settled in the area. The agency works with both documented and undocumented immigrants and helps them access those benefits and services to which they are legally entitled as well as explain why they cannot access other benefits. Currently services can be provided in French, German, Lao, Russian, Spanish, Vietnamese, Mandarin, and other languages are available on request. The types of services range from job search help to translation and interpretation to counseling and tutoring. The Center's main office is in Champaign, and it also offers help in Ranoul. Key problems in obtaining housing faced by immigrants in central Illinois include:

*Social Security Number:* In this area a person needs to have a social security number to get housing. Even for documented immigrants, the process of getting a social security card typically takes about three weeks.

*Credit histories* present another stumbling block since many immigrants pride themselves on not spending beyond their means. Sometimes, they find that their careful budgeting has prevented them from establishing a credit history, and they cannot obtain approval for renting an apartment.

*Language:* Typically leases are only written in English and involve difficult, legal language.

In addition, immigrants often are used to living in smaller spaces than zoning regulations permit. When several families share housing, they may unintentionally get into trouble for violating the codes about over-crowding.

Other problems that immigrants look to the Refugee Center to help resolve, include child care needs, utilities service, identity theft, setting up bank accounts, and driver's licenses and auto insurance.

**Immigrants at Work, at Home, and in the  
Community:  
Shaping Immigration Policy that Reflects  
Reality**

*Kathy Latak*

*Heartland Alliance for Human Needs and Human Rights*

One of the greatest factors affecting immigrants is current state and federal immigration policy, which has a profound effect on immigrants' abilities to assimilate, to work, to maintain their families together, and to be successful in the U.S. Some of the obstacles that immigrants may face are assimilation issues, learning English, and finding well-paid and fulfilling employment. All of these issues are very much impacted upon – positively or negatively – by our current policies and political agendas. Following is an overview of current policies and a discussion of how Latino and other immigrants fare under these policies, including actual case stories. I will touch on some of the most critical issues that immigrants face and describe related pending legislation.

**An Overview of Activity in the Illinois General Assembly in  
relation to immigrant and refugee issues:**

Last year, with the support of Heartland Alliance, the Illinois Coalition for Immigrant and Refugee Rights (ICIRR), and various other organizations, State Representative Harry Osterman and Senator Martin Sandoval formed the Joint Illinois Task Force on Immigrants and Refugees. This Task Force was formed to shape Illinois policy towards immigrants and refugees and to develop policy recommendations that support the social integration of immigrants into the community. Throughout the fall of 2003, the Task Force, made up of bipartisan members of the Illinois House and Senate, held hearings on

issues such as *healthcare, citizenship, education, literacy, workplace issues, and housing*. The Task Force is currently compiling a final report to present to the Illinois Legislature. Through these hearings, immigrant groups and advocates were able to address the Task Force on a multitude of issues facing immigrants in Illinois. In essence, this Task Force shows an understanding of the growing and ever dispersing immigrant community in Illinois and the need to formulate policies that advance the self-sufficiency and integration of Illinois' immigrants. One of the major bills that has come out of the Task Force is one that we at Heartland are working on directly. So, please allow me to give you some background on this bill, the issue, and how it affects immigrants, mostly Latinos.

#### SB2548 – Consumer Protection for Immigrants

Keeping in mind the vulnerable position of undocumented immigrants, there inevitably are unscrupulous people who prey on them and reap financial benefits by ripping them off. One of the major issues that came out of the Task Force hearings was the need to further regulate notaries that serve immigrant communities, as they often prey on immigrants who mistakenly believe that notaries are public attorneys and pay them for legal advice on their immigration cases. This is especially prevalent in Latino communities, where notaries display signs stating that they are 'Notarios Publicos,' which implies a highly trained public attorney in Spanish. Many such notaries – and others who are not attorneys – encourage clients to apply for immigration status for which they are not eligible. This unauthorized immigration advice often jeopardizes immigrants' legitimate immigration applications. Many immigrants think that they are receiving legal advice on immigration, while a notary has no such training or authority. In addition, many notaries charge high fees for these services they are not authorized to provide.



In a bill introduced this session by Senator Sandoval, we hope to further restrict and define what notaries and other non-attorneys are authorized to do and to make it easier to prosecute the violators.

#### **HB4003 – Driver's License Bill**

Another factor greatly impacting immigrants in Illinois is that they are currently not able to get a driver's license if they do not have a social security number. Without a driver's license, immigrants are not able to drive to work, to drive their children to school, or they are forced to drive without a license, and thus without auto insurance. There is widespread support for providing an alternative number for immigrants to use to be able to get a driver's license, and thus to go through the driver's examination and to purchase insurance. This is being debated in Springfield in the form of HB 4003, an effort led by the ICIRR. (This bill recently lost in the House).

#### **Other Policies**

As we discuss these problems that many immigrants face because of their legal status, the backlog of our immigration system, and the failure of our immigration system to fit the realities of our immigrant populations and our employment needs, we need to encourage positive, appropriate immigration policies. As I am sure many of you have heard, President Bush announced a plan for immigration reform, involving a temporary guest worker program. While we and nation-wide advocates are pleased that the President acknowledged the hard work of many undocumented immigrants in the U.S. and the long backlogs they face toward legal status, we also had hoped for his support for true immigration reform, in the form of a genuine proposal, and one that includes provisions for family reunification and a path to citizenship. There are also several other bills out there that would greatly benefit hard working immigrants, but the President has not put his will behind them.

One such bill is the DREAM Act, which would allow undocumented high school graduates to continue on to college with in-state tuition, and would allow them a path to legal status. As you may know, we passed a similar bill in Illinois last year, so that now Illinois students can go on to college, regardless of their immigration status. Another bill is **AgJobs (the Agricultural Job Opportunity, Benefits, and Security Act)**, which would provide a path to legal status for undocumented agricultural workers. This bill is supported both by Farmworker advocates and by the Growers. Both bills have strong bipartisan support.

**A Few of the Immigration Programs that Provide Relief to Immigrants, especially women in many cases:** These programs are important in understanding the issues facing immigrants, as well as the remedies available.

**Victims Against Women Act (VAWA)**

An immigrant is normally sponsored by a citizen family member or spouse, but what happens when that person is abusing them? Imagine a woman married to a U.S. citizen, and she is dependent on him for her legal status. Imagine that he abuses her and their children. She finds it difficult to leave him, for without his cooperation, she will lose her legal status, will become undocumented and thus deportable, and she will not be able to legally work and support herself. She is dependent on her abuser to legally stay in this country. Fortunately, there is relief for such cases, in the form of the Violence against Women Act, or VAWA, which provides immigration relief to victims of domestic violence whose status depends on an abuser. Through VAWA, victims of domestic violence can receive legal status independent of their abusing sponsor. An example of how this works is in the following case story:

Rosalba

Rosalba (not her real name) and her two children lived with her abusive U.S. citizen husband for almost nine years. Her eldest daughter moved to another city to live with her grandmother, because she could not endure her step-father's abuse of her mother. Throughout their nine-year relationship, the husband abused the wife physically, psychologically and emotionally. One of Rosalba's greatest obstacles to leaving this abusive relationship was the lack of legal permission to work. When Rosalba sought assistance from a domestic violence counselor, she was told that she might qualify for legal immigration relief under VAWA, which gave her great hope. She contacted MHRRC (Hearland's Midwest Immigrant and Human Rights Center), who accepted her case and helped her apply for relief under VAWA.

Rosalba still had to wait eight months to receive her work authorization, during which time her husband continued to abuse her and threaten to throw her and her children out of the house. Yet, she could not yet leave her husband because she had not been granted her work authorization. She had a job interview to work as a receptionist at a hotel, but was turned down due to the lack of employment authorization. When she finally received her employment authorization, she was able to relocate to live with her grandmother and daughter and was surrounded by other supportive family members. She now believes that she can have a future free from the violence she has lived with for so many years.

## Trafficking

There is also relief to victims of trafficking, those who are subjected to forced labor, slavery, or debt bondage. These victims come from diverse countries and can be eligible for immigration relief through the Trafficking Victims Protection Act. Such victims are not only women, but also men and children, and their forced labor is not only in the sex trade, but most commonly in domestic service, factory and garment work, and agriculture. Heartland Alliance provides both social services and legal services to trafficking victims in Illinois and in an eight-state region. There is also extensive outreach to law enforcement officials, social service providers, and immigrant organizations on how to properly identify and refer victims of trafficking.

## U Visa

The final form of relief for immigrants is the U visa, which is similar to VAWA, in that it offers immigration relief to immigrants who have suffered physical or mental abuse as a result of being victims of certain crimes. Many of these crimes are violent and gender-related, such as rape, torture, sexual exploitation, and false imprisonment. Many of the victims are women and children, and examples include victims of domestic violence, nannies who are abused by their employers, and victims of rape in the workplace. In order to qualify for a U visa, the immigrant victim must agree to cooperate with law enforcement in prosecuting the case, which is often something that requires much courage in these cases. Within three years of receiving the U visa, the person may adjust to legal permanent resident status. The U visa is a great program and is mutually beneficial: it encourages crime reporting in immigrant communities and so provides assistance to local law enforcement to stop crime. For the immigrant, their cooperation leads to immigration relief and a visa, which allows them to work and eventually gain legal

status. The regulations for the U visa have not yet been set, so the processing of the visas has been somewhat disorderly, but this is a promising first step. Many immigrants from Mexico and Central America fall victim to trafficking and forced servitude, and the U visa and the Trafficking Protection Act are steps towards assisting those victims and apprehending the smugglers who prey on them.

### CLEAR Act

On the other side of the spectrum, there is also pending legislation that sends the opposite message to immigrants about participating with law enforcement and reporting crimes. Specifically, the CLEAR Act (the Clear Law Enforcement for Criminal Alien Removal), which is still being debated in the House and the Senate, will compel local police departments to enforce immigration law or lose federal funds. With the CLEAR Act, local police would become de-facto local immigration agents, thus breaking down any community policing in areas with high numbers of immigrants. Just imagine – immigrants will avoid contact with local police, out of fear that they will be turned over to immigration services and will be deported, and thus immigrants will be fearful to report crimes, to report domestic abuse, and to serve as witnesses. Instead of making our communities safer (which is the stated intention), it will make life more dangerous for all of us, as whole communities stop cooperating with law enforcement. This bill also adds additional burdens on local law enforcement, without providing funding or training. Local police departments are already overburdened with additional homeland security duties, and this would be yet another that would make their jobs harder. Police departments and immigrant groups across the country oppose the CLEAR Act. This is just a brief synopsis of a few of the legislative priorities that will greatly impact the ability of immigrants

here in Illinois, in the Midwest, and in the U.S. to work, to live in security, and to stay connected with their families. In conclusion, I want to emphasize that these immigration backlogs and difficulties do not only affect the lesser educated, non-English speaking Latino immigrants, for these problems are across the board, cutting across economic levels, backgrounds, education levels, and gender. Our immigration policies are severely restricting Latino and other immigrants – at all levels – from working, from having freedom of movement, and from moving ahead. What a waste that is for them and for our country. How much more they can give, if only our policies more uniformly reflected the reality of immigrants, immigration, and employment needs.

**Developing the 'College Knowledge' of Latina/  
Immigrant Parents: A Case Example  
and a Summary of the  
Educational Perspectives of Two Mexican  
Immigrant Mothers/Las Perspectivas  
Educativas de dos Madres Mexicanas**

Rosalinda B. Barrera and Annel Medina  
University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign

*Also drawing on presentations by local immigrant women  
(Interpreters: Rosalinda Barrera and Maria Silva)*

Research has shown that Latino immigrant parents value education in general and are interested in the educational attainment of their children; however, they often do not know the language and culture of schooling and higher education. Consequently, such parents are limited in helping their children access educational programs and opportunities and the larger task of navigating their way through elementary and secondary schooling and onward to postsecondary education and college/university studies if possible. A recently established unit on the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign campus, the Center on Democracy in a Multiracial Society (CDMS), has pursued an ongoing project in its first two years aimed at helping a group of local Latino immigrant parents develop "college knowledge" that might aid in advancing their children through the education pipeline. At the WGGP symposium, selected aspects of the Latino Action Project were discussed from two perspectives in a joint presentation involving (a) Center personnel involved in tapping into and/or creating educational experiences on campus for parents and their children, and (b) two members of the parent group who have participated in Center activities and also serve as vocal advocates at the local level for improvement in educational services for Latino students. CDMS administrator Dr. Rosalinda

B. Barrera, Interim Associate Director, and Annel Medina, research assistant, began with a brief chronology of the project and an outline of its goals, both short- and long-term. It was noted that Illinois recently passed the Student Adjustment Act, becoming one of four states in the country that now allow immigrant students of good academic standing and extended residence to qualify for in-state residence status, thus helping to make a college/university education relatively more attainable for this population. Local community and school demographics were presented, highlighting the growing Latino population in Champaign-Urbana, followed by a brief discussion of current and projected Center activities to promote parents' college knowledge. One type of activity conducted last summer consisted of campus tours for elementary and middle school students and their parents. Another activity was a computer class for adults. In progress currently is an effort by the Center to identify local Latino immigrant youth who might be interested in attending summer residential camps at UIUC focused on science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM). A strong parental interest in the science and mathematics achievement of their children, voiced in part by the two mothers participating in this session, provided the impetus for CDMS to begin to explore a number of outreach programs on campus. The two immigrant women discussed their children's experiences in the local schools, parental observations of the schools, and educational areas needing attention in their estimation. After the women's introductory remarks, the session was quite interactive, with conference participants engaging in a critical dialogue with the parents to better understand their views on improving health and educational services for immigrants. Among the education-specific topics discussed were bilingual schooling, middle school education, school-home connections, and parental involvement. The two women also spoke about sundry difficulties they have encountered as they have become



more vocal about the need for educational improvements, including negative comments about their advocacy work and not feeling welcomed in some schools. While their commentary was in Spanish, the two women indicated they are in the process of learning English. They pointed to a pressing need in the community for more English as a second language (ESL) programs for adults.



## Representations of Latinas

Angharad N. Valdivia

University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign

with

Susan Harewood and Isabel Molina Guzman

This small list is just a little intervention into the public discourse about Latinas. Since so many of the myths about Latinas are circulated through popular culture and the mass media, it is important to set them against verifiable and documented evidence to the contrary.

1. *Latinas/os are almost always represented as the eternal outsiders--as permanent newcomers.* While it's true that there are new waves of immigrants and migrants, the fact also is that Latinas predate the existence of Anglos in this country—the country's borders changed but the presence of people we now call Latinas is centuries old; as well in many communities throughout the country, including the Midwest, Latinas have long standing roots, citizenship, and community involvement. In fact, Latinas are not passive.
2. *Latinas/os only speak Spanish.* This may be the case for newly arrived Latinas/os but as with any other language, most Latinas/os learn the English language within a generation or less. Most Latinas/os are bilingual or English-dominant if not outright monolingual—those who are monolingual do not retain a "Spanish accent" across generations.
3. *Latinas are either "hot" or religiously devoted and exceptionally self-abnegated.* These are nothing more than racist tropes used to differentiate between ethnicities and not speaking to the heterogeneity of both the Latina

- and all other populations.
4. *Latinas are all Roman Catholic.* While Roman Catholicism remains a major institutional force in Latin America, not all Latinas have recently arrived from Latin America nor are all Latinas Roman Catholic [nor are all Latin Americans Roman Catholic]. Latinas come in all religious tendencies, from Jewish to Mormon to Muslim... to name a few. In fact, Protestant evangelism is growing fastest in Latin American countries.
  5. *All Latinas are of Mexican origin.* Latinas come from all over. Some of them have resided in the U.S. for so long that they consider themselves U.S. Latinas. Others have single or multiple hyphenated identities [Mexican-American, Nicaraguan-Costa Rican-American, Puerto Rican-African-American, etc.]. Pan-Latinidad allows for larger umbrella politics but it also has its difficulties and prejudices from within.
  6. *All Latinas are brown.* That becomes an easy way to categorize a diverse group of people who span the racial spectrum from white to black and everything in between.
  7. *Latinas hold just one occupation—maid.* Latinas occupy the range of the professional spectrum [as they also occupy the range of the wages spectrum]. Due to issues of structural nature [especially education, etc.] Latinas encounter glass ceilings but many Latinas have high professional status and middle to high range income. Still the percentage of Latinas finishing high school and going to college is very low and poverty rates, health uninsured rates, AIDS rates are very high. This is due to structural reasons not to lack of activity, perseverance, or illegal status.

**From Newcomers to New Americans:  
Building Immigrant Power**

**A Report on the Annual Summit of  
the Illinois Coalition for Immigrant and  
Refugee Rights (ICIRR)**

Chicago, IL, January 23-24, 2004

*Martisa Zapata*

*University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign*

**General Notes and Comments**

Overall the conference was exciting, informative, and well run. The turnout (roughly 400 people) was double what the ICIRR had anticipated. Broad representation from legislative and policy groups, labor organizations, community based organizations, government service providers, and community members made for a balanced discussion on the mechanics of needed legislation and personal testimony of working with or coming from an immigrant community.

Emphasis was placed on the need to adopt a national legislative agenda providing a path for citizenship for guest workers and undocumented residents and targeting state legislative opportunities to support immigrants, out of status and with status. Specific legislation at the federal level discussed included the PATRIOT Act will come up for reauthorization this year and work will be necessary to undo the damage to immigrant civil liberties. State legislative efforts include the New American's Fund and passing legislation allowing undocumented workers to obtain a driver's license (the bill failed last year by 1 vote). While President Bush was credited for putting immigrant community needs back on the national agenda, his proposal was heavily criticized.

The upcoming election provides an important opportunity for the foreign born and community supporters to demonstrate

their power. Last summer's freedom riders were acknowledged as playing an important role in instigating a national dialogue on immigrant needs.

The importance of unity between Arab, Muslim, Southeast Asian, and Latin immigrant groups was underscored. The deportation action taken against 13,000 Arabs and Muslims since September 11<sup>th</sup> was repeatedly discussed.

While there was representation and participation

from across the state, Midwest, and country (especially D.C.)

discussion centered on the Chicago metropolitan area. It was

evident that many people were working to create a base to

support and push forward legislation, and areas outside of

Chicago are not seen as necessarily significant in that capacity.

At the same time, a number of the people I spoke with indicated

they would be willing to work with groups in the downstate

Champaign-Urbana area (i.e. the Latino partnership). Given the

election year, groups are also willing to support voter registration

and Get Out The Vote drives. A new campaign, the New

Americans Vote Campaign, may be of interest.

### Notes on Specific Workshops

*Workshop 1 – Too Expensive, Poor Living Conditions and*

*Overcrowded: Immigrant Housing Challenges & Opportunities*

Speakers from: Heartland Alliance, Latinos United, Organization

of the Northeast (of Chicagoland), an immigrant lawyers' group,

the Jane Addams Senior Caucus

- The general ICIR report on immigrants does not address housing at all.

- The discussion focused on state-based legislative efforts to remedy problems particular to Illinois immigrant communities.

- Emphasized that 50% of income goes to housing in low-income immigrant communities in the

nation and that 17% are living in deplorable housing. Immigrants in Chicago metro area

prefer to build new housing as opposed to

- building new homes. As much as 20% of new construction in North Chicago suburbs is attributable to foreign-born populations. Immigrants want to be homeowners though the vast majority are renters. Most live in high-density housing.
- The '90s rental housing boom was result of immigration influx. Studies indicate that without immigrants, housing rates would have declined. While many states have crafted legislation to circumvent federal legislation preventing immigrants from accessing housing support programs, Illinois has NOT passed any such legislation.
- In addition to housing conditions, without legal protection many landlords take advantage of immigrants, especially the undocumented, charging high security deposits on the grounds that credit history cannot be tracked, not returning deposits, eviction without cause, etc. Urban landlord laws are among the best in the state in protecting tenants in general but these laws are not reflected at the state level.
- Illinois is one of only 17 states without a Residential Landlord Tenant Act where the goal is to resolve conflict, not to evict.
- Despite the challenge for immigrant communities to access federally funded housing programs, many foreign born found their way into section 8 buildings. Presently many of those buildings are up for contracts and the landlords fail to renew their contracts, as many are doing, the residents are pushed out. Bill engrossed in the State Senate would allow residents first chance to purchase or locate developer/owner

- Need to provide better support to and watch for buildings.
  - smaller building owners who may be neglecting structures or discriminating as well as may be under pressure from surrounding residents to rent to certain "types" of people.

Workshop 2 – *Women's Health: TABOO – Why Immigrant*

*Women's Health is at Risk*

Speakers from: Apna Ghar, Arab American Family Services, Mujeres Latinas en Accion, & Hamdard Center

- Discussion focused on access to health care, proper nutrition, and exercise.
- Additional discussion on cultural barriers and need to educate own communities as well as provide cultural competency training for health care providers and have onsite trained translators.
- Highlighted cultural issues included: privacy, sense that illness is a punishment, women's nurturing of everyone but themselves, language Arab community has few statistics available – traditionally included in White categories
- Speakers from the Arab, Southeast Asian, Hispanic, and Bosnian communities mentioned many of the same illnesses disproportionately impacting their communities, namely diabetes, hypertension, heart disease, late-stage cervical and breast cancer, and depression (some of these are related to nutritious food access and exercise, others to cancer screening). Post-traumatic stress disorder is especially high among Bosnian women and cultural tendency not to seek help or conceive their symptoms as an illness prevents them from accessing available support.



- Limited discussion on the impact on lifestyle change for immigrants living in communities where exercise and better nutrition are more built in.

*Workshop 3 – Organized Labor and Immigrants*

Speakers from: Hotel Employees and Restaurant Employees Union Local 1 (HERE), SEIU Local 1, UFCW Local 881

- Union participation is a key indicator of economic income level (those that participate in unions make more than their counterparts).
- Long discussion on the controversial nature of Walmart. UFCW is presently striking in Southern California. Grocery store workers are striking to protest local chains & small business owners' decision to get rid of pension programs in response to Walmart's recent market penetration. UFCW speakers emphasized the importance of working with Walmart to convince them to change their worker policies here and its relevance to workers here.
- HERE (Hotel & Rest. Employees) emphasized the importance of confidentiality in their organizing efforts. For their work, keeping everything hidden from hotel management until it was arranged was imperative. Workers going to government offices often received poor advice in how to organize.
- SEIU seconded that, highlighting that government organizing ideas were outdated. Unions no longer want elections but card check unions.
- SEIU spoke about their internal challenges dealing with population change. In Chicago, the largely Polish foreign and native born populations were ill equipped and unwilling to

- meet needs of Spanish speaking communities. Things have changed radically, but required intense internal efforts. All three unions believed that President Bush's guest worker proposal falls drastically short of needed changes.

*Workshop 4 – Midwest Regional Meeting on Legalization*

Speakers from: Center for Community Change, Centro Sin Fronteras, representatives from Wisconsin, Indiana, Iowa and Michigan on their efforts, local Arab American group

- Discussion on Working Principles for Comprehensive Immigration Reform and participants
- General agreement on principles from panelists and participants
- Concern about the details of legislative program (the "devil's in the details"), especially present "quota" system, any work history requirement
- Addressing refugee communities will be incorporated into the principles
- PATRIOT Act is up for reauthorization this year
- Any legislation (i.e. Bush proposal) failing to provide a path for citizenship is not acceptable
- Any guest worker component of a legislation plan will need to be carefully reviewed given such program history (i.e. Bracero programs)
- Group is looking for support to publicize and mobilize base support for principles. Particular attention needs to be paid to registering voters and Get Out the Vote campaigns. Further effort is needed in reaching mid-line voters, those sympathetic to immigrant plight but unable to address law breaking status.

**Funding Opportunities**

The ICIRR is issuing a new RFP for its Outreach and Interpretation Project. The project is funded by the Illinois Department of Human Services and is intended to "facilitate immigrant access in Illinois through community outreach, information & referral, case management, and language interpretation and translation, using the skills and resources of community organizations."

**Notes**

<sup>1</sup> The above figures were presented by the Heartland Alliance.

## Conclusion of Symposium

Notes by Gale Summerfeld

The symposium concluded with a discussion among participants about directions for study and work. We are only beginning to learn about the different activities and needs of immigrant women and men who are settling in less traditional areas of the Midwest. We learned a lot about variations in options available in the Chicago metropolitan area in contrast with central Illinois. Housing shortages and more limited options are common problems in the small towns of central Illinois. The two local women who have been working to improve the education that their children received began a discussion of how UI research can lead to needed community improvements. We identified two target areas for engagement with the community organizations in the coming period: education and health care. More tutors are needed and the university could clearly contribute to these areas. East Central Illinois Refugee Mutual Assistance Center already runs a tutoring program for some groups in addition to what is available through the school system. We decided to try to expand these programs. Champaign County Health Care Consumers is working on an initiative to get more interpreters in the hospitals. This is an area that closely relates to the Women and Gender in Global Perspectives Program's research project and would be a good way to support community organizations. We also talked about involving the newly established local network, Latina/o Partnership. The need for driver's licenses was discussed as another place where immediate actions could make a difference in the quality of people's lives. Changes directed at the bigger picture of cultural citizenship were also discussed. Clearly, more research also needs to be carried out because there are many gaps in our knowledge about the activities and needs of women and men in small communities and the ways that host communities can adjust to rapid demographic changes.

## Panelists' Biographies

Mary Arends-Kuenning is an Assistant Professor of Agricultural and Consumer Economics at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign (UIUC). She received an M.A. from the University of Chicago, and an M.A. and a Ph.D. from the University of Michigan. Her research focuses on demographic change in developing countries and has been published in *Population and Development Review*, *Economics of Education Review*, *International Family Planning Perspectives*, and *Studies in Family Planning*.

Brooke Anderson is a community organizer for Champaign County Health Care Consumers (CCHCC), a grassroots, citizen action organization working with consumers to fight for quality, affordable health care for all. CCHCC and local immigrant rights leaders have launched a campaign for improved interpreter services in the local health care facilities.

Jocelyn Armstrong, Associate Professor in the Department of Community Health at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, is working on the WGGP project on gender and human security of immigrants in the Midwest. Much of her work has focused on problems of the elderly in Asia and the U.S.

Martisa Barrera serves as Executive Vice President of ACCION New Mexico, an award-winning nonprofit organization that provides underserved entrepreneurs with access to capital and business development services. She is a member of the board of directors of the Association for Enterprise Opportunity, a national association of over 400 microenterprise development organizations dedicated to creating opportunities for entrepreneurs in the United States. Her work in the field of microenterprise development was recognized with a 1999 Financial Services Advocate of the Year Award for the state of New Mexico from the U.S. Small Business Administration. Ms. Barrera holds a Bachelor of Arts degree from the University of New Mexico and a Master of Public Affairs degree from the Woodrow Wilson School of Public and International Affairs of Princeton University.

Rosalinda Barrera, Professor in the Department of Curriculum and Instruction at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, teaches graduate and undergraduate courses in multicultural children's literature and early childhood literacy. She is currently serving as Interim Associate Director of the Center of Democracy in a Multiracial Society, a cross-campus initiative. Barrera's research interests include the representation

of Latinos in children's books and the literacy development of bilingual Latino students in the primary grades.

Nancy Cantor is nationally known as an advocate for affirmative action and for racial and ethnic diversity in higher education. Before becoming Chancellor, the chief executive officer of the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, Dr. Cantor was provost and executive vice president for academic affairs at the University of Michigan. She has been dean of the Horace H. Rackham School of Graduate Studies at Michigan, vice provost for academic affairs at Michigan, and chair of the department of psychology at Princeton University. Dr. Cantor received her A.B. in 1974 from Sarah Lawrence College and her Ph.D. in psychology in 1978 from Stanford University. She specializes in the fields of personality and social psychology, and personality and cognition. Chancellor Cantor has co-authored or co-edited three books and is the author or co-author of numerous book chapters and scientific journal articles.

Manisha Desai is Associate Professor of Sociology and Program Coordinator of Women and Gender in Global Perspectives Program at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. Her research has primarily been on women's movements in India and gender and globalization. Her recent publications include *Women's Activism and Globalization: Linking Local Struggles to Transnational Politics*, co-edited with Nancy Naples and published by Routledge in 2002 and *Women's Issues in Asia*, published by Greenwood in 2003.

Katharine Donato is Associate Professor of Sociology at Rice University, Houston, TX. Her research lies in the fields of stratification and social demography, and focuses on international migration, social determinants of health, and ethnic/gender stratification. In the past, her work has covered a variety of topics including the effects of immigration policy on Mexico-U.S. migration flows and the labor force and educational outcomes of Latinos in the United States. More recently, she has been writing about how social networks affect the health of Mexican families, how immigration and religion explain differences in adolescent health behaviors, the process of immigrant assimilation in nontraditional receiving destinations in the United States, and sex differences in the social process of undocumented border crossing.

Marianne A. Ferber, Professor of Economics and Women's Studies, Emertia, University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign, was born in Czechoslovakia in 1923, obtained her BA at McMaster University in Canada in 1944 and her Ph.D. at the University of Chicago in 1954. She is co-author of *The Economics of Women, Men, and Work*, (4th ed. 2002), editor of *Women in the Labor Market*, 1998; *Beyond Economic Man*, 1993 and *Feminist Economics Today: Beyond Economic Man*, 2003;

*Academic Couples*, 1997; and *Nonstandard Work*, 2000. She has also published in numerous economics, sociology, education and women's studies journals.

Stacy Harwood is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Urban and Regional Planning at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. She works with the East St. Louis Project on neighborhood revitalization and community activism. She is working with the gender and human security of immigrants of WGGP.

Deborah Hiawna, Ph.D., is Co-Director of the East Central Illinois Refugee Mutual Assistance Center which is located in Urbana, IL. ECIRMAC or the Refugee Center was started by refugees in 1982, to provide those services that are essential to refugee/immigrant resettlement in East Central Illinois. Currently services can be provided in French, German, Lao, Russian, Spanish, Vietnamese, Mandarin, and other languages are available on request.

Pierrette Hondagneu-Sotelo is Professor of Sociology at the University of Southern California. Her research has focused on the intersections of gender and Mexican undocumented immigration and settlement, transnational families and the changing meanings of family life, and the informal sector, particularly the realm of paid domestic work. Since the publication of her book, *Gendered Transitions: Mexican Experiences of Immigration* (1994), she has become one of the most important scholars of Latino migration in the contemporary U.S. Her current research is fueled by interest in the immigrant rights movement. Towards this end, she has researched clergy mobilizations in support of labor union rights of low-wage immigrant workers and community advocacy responding to the post-September 11 backlash directed at immigrant communities. At the USC Center for Religion and Civic Culture she collaborates with researchers to understand how religion is woven into the experiences of immigrants. Her forthcoming volume, *Gender and Contemporary U.S. Immigration*, will examine diverse U.S. immigrant groups, and cover a range of topics.

Kathy Latek serves as the Policy and Program Liaison for immigrant and refugee issues for Heartland Human Care Services, an affiliate of Heartland Alliance. She currently works on state and federal legislative policy affecting immigrants and refugees. Prior to joining Heartland Alliance, she worked with Catholic Relief Services in Africa, serving in both Malawi and Angola on programming for orphans of HIV/AIDS and emergency services for people affected by war. She has also worked with the UNHCR in Mexico, as a social worker in Chicago, and as a teacher in the Republic of the Marshall Islands. She received her Masters degree in International Relations, with a focus on migration issues, from the Johns

Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies in Washington, DC. Paola León was born in Lima, Peru and at the age of 12 moved to Puerto Rico. While completing a bachelor's degree in Social Work at the University of Puerto Rico, she volunteered for an organization that worked with prevention of violence against women and children. In 2001 she completed a master's degree in Social Work and a minor in Women and Gender in Global Perspectives at UIUC. She did an internship at a local Rape Crisis Services (RCS) and worked there for two years before returning to school to work on her Ph.D. While at RCS she developed an outreach program for the local Latino community and a children's program. In October 2001 she became part of a group that started the first local Spanish newspaper, *El Informador*, launching the first issue of the paper in March 2002. She is currently the director of the newspaper as well as a Ph.D. student at UIUC pursuing a dual degree program in the School of Social Work and the Center for Latin American and Caribbean Studies. She is also a graduate assistant for WGCP.

Annel Medina completed her bachelor's degree from the University of California at Irvine in Sociology and Political Science in June 2001. Subsequently, in May 2003 she completed a master's thesis project titled: "Latina Parental Leadership and Social Networking in Community-School Settings." She is currently a doctoral student in the Department of Educational Policy Studies with a specialization in Sociology of Education at UIUC. Additionally, she is a research assistant at the Center on Democracy in a Multiracial Society. Her research interests include qualitative research, Latino/a Critical Theory, Latino/a parental involvement, and underrepresented student's access to higher education.

Faranak Mirafitab is Assistant Professor in the Department of Urban and Regional Planning at University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. She has worked on housing issues and community activism in South Africa. She is working on housing aspects of human security with the WGCP project on immigrants.

Maria Isabel Silva, from Ecuador, is a graduate student pursuing her Ph.D. in the Institute of Communications Research at UIUC. She has wide experience doing research with a variety of communities in Latin America and in the U.S. Among her interests are transnationalism and migration. Using interactive video documentary methodology, she has been studying transnational motherhood and migration among the Mexican migrant communities of the Midwest. Her video, *Mexican Migrant Women on the Prairies: Transnational Motherhood and Communities*, is a project in progress which she hopes will give a voice



to the Mexican migrant workers of the area, to "put a human face" to the statistics, and to share with the wider community their work, aspirations and daily life here in the Midwestern U.S. She is a graduate assistant with the WCGP Program.

Gale Summerfield is Director of the Women and Gender in Global Perspectives Program and Associate Professor of Human and Community Development at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. She has written extensively on gender aspects of reforms in China and other developing countries. Recently she completed an edited volume on *Institutions, Resources, and Mobilization: Women and Gender Equity in Development Theory and Practice*. To examine how globalization affects Illinois, she has organized a study of immigrants and their host communities, focusing on health care access and alternatives, housing, income security, and education in small towns and rural areas. Her articles appear in journals such as *International Journal of Politics, Culture, and Society*, *World Development*, *Journal of Economic Issues*, *Review of Social Economics*, and *Review of Political Economy*. She was guest editor of a special issue of the *International Journal of Politics, Culture, and Society* on "Risks and Rights in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century." This issue explored policies to reduce the long-run losses from financial and economic crises, informalization of employment, and democratization in politics. She is co-editor of *Women in the Age of Economic Transformation and Women's Rights to House and Land: China, Laos, Vietnam*. Her current research interests address gender, human security (income, property rights, and health) and transnational migration.

Elizabeth Sweet was born and raised in New York City. She received her undergraduate degree from Boston University in Soviet and East European Studies, worked for state and federal agencies including child support and social security, as well as volunteering at various community development organizations before going back to school and obtaining a Masters of Urban Planning and Policy and then a Ph.D. in Public Policy Analysis from the University of Illinois at Chicago. While in Mexico for three years she studied how the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) was affecting women. From 2000-2001 in Siberia, while teaching at Omsk State University, she collected data about how women were faring under transition. At Instituto del Progreso Latino as the Action Research Director, she is currently working on research projects and program development that address the needs and desires of low-income Latinas. She is also a Visiting Lecturer and Adjunct Assistant Professor at Northeastern Illinois University, Sociology Department and University of Illinois at Chicago in Urban Planning and Policy respectively. She will go to Mexico in 2005 as a Rockefeller Resident

Fellow to look at changing labor strategies of women in the south central region, including cooperative work, land and business ownership, as well as national and international migration.

**Lauren Tobey** is a graduate student in Nutrition at UUC and a graduate assistant with WGP. She has worked as a dietitian with the Women, Infant, and Children (WIC) program in San Diego County and has published on international differences in food guides (with J. Painter). Currently she is working on health and nutrition issues of Latinas in the Midwest.

**Maura Toro-Morn**, Associate Professor of Sociology, Illinois State University teaches undergraduate and graduate courses on the intersection of race, class, and gender. She has also taught Introduction to Latino studies and special topic seminars about global migrations and Latino immigration to the U.S. A book she edited with Maritza Alicea entitled, *Migration and Immigration: A Global View*, will be released this month by Greenwood Press. She has written and published numerous articles on the class and gender dimensions of Puerto Rican migration to Chicago. She is currently working on a second book manuscript, *A Gendered View of Global Migrations*. Other areas of research include Latino immigrant families, gender and work in the Caribbean.

**Angharad Valdivia** is Associate Professor of Communications and of Media Studies in the Institute of Communications Research at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. Her primary areas of interest include international communications; feminist studies; post-colonial studies; Latin American studies; Latina/Latino studies; and multicultural studies. Her research combines the areas of feminist multicultural issues with international communications studies. She has conducted field research in Nicaragua, Peru, and Chile. She is editor of *Feminism, Multiculturalism, and the Media: Global Diversities* [Sage: 1995] and is finishing a book entitled *The Frustrations of Culture: Gender, Race and Class in the Everyday*. She has published essays in the *Journal of Communication*, the *Journal of International Communication*, the *Review of Education/Pedagogy/Cultural Studies*, the *International Journal of Inclusive Education, Women and Language, and Chasqui*. She is the editor of the Communications and Culture section of the *Global Women's Encyclopedia*.

**Martisa Zapata** is a graduate student in the Department of Urban and Regional Planning at UUC. Her previous work experience includes policy work related to U.S. immigrant and Latino communities and public health research and service delivery for populations located domestically and internationally. She has a B.A. in anthropology from Rice University.

## WGFP NEWS

### EVENTS: BLOCKBUSTER FALL!

During Fall 2004 Semester, WGFP will host three of the leading scholars in the women, gender, development, and globalization fields: Professors Wu Qing, Irene Tinker, and Nancy Folbre.

September 20-23

Wu Qing, Professor Emerita, Beijing Foreign Language University and People's Deputy, Beijing Municipal People's Congress, will visit campus as a George A. Miller Endowment Visiting Professor. Wu Qing has experience in academics, politics, and nongovernmental organizations. She helped set up and run the first telephone hotline in Beijing for women to voice their problems and get support. She started a television series about a young woman in Beijing. She is director of Cultural Development Center for Rural Women and is currently working for the rights of rural-urban migrants to education in the city. Prof. Wu Qing will be speaking on "Rural Urban Migration in China and Equality Issues." Her visit will be partly funded by the Center for East Asian and Pacific Studies and will coincide with activities for the Year of Asia.

In conjunction with Wu Qing's visit, WGFP is also inviting Irene Tinker, Professor Emerita from the University of California-Berkeley. She was a founder of the International Center for Research on Women, the Wellesley Center for Research on Women, and the Equity Policy Center. Her current research focuses on women's accumulation of power through home ownership and electoral representation. Major publications include *Persistent Inequalities* (1990), *Street Foods* (1997), *Women's Rights to House and Land: China, Laos, Vietnam* (1999) and a forthcoming book on *Developing Power: How Women Transformed International Development* (with Arvonne Fraser). Professors Tinker and Wu Qing will speak on "Women's Political Participation in Asia."

October 21-23

Nancy Folbre, Professor of Economics, University of Massachusetts-Amherst, explores the interface between economics and feminist theory, focusing on non-market work and the evolution of social institutions governing public support for childrearing. Her many publications include *The Invisible Heart: Economics and Family Values* (2001); *The Ultimate Field Guide to the U.S. Economy* (2000); *Who Pays for the Kids? Gender and the Structures of Constraint* (1994); and a forthcoming book entitled *Family Time* (Routledge). Professor Folbre has been the recipient of numerous research grants, and in 1998 she won the prestigious MacArthur Foundation Genius Award. She is presently co-chair of the MacArthur Foundation Research Network on the Family and the Economy and was president of the International Association for Feminist Economics two years ago. She is Co-Founder and Chief Executive Officer of The Dancing Monkey Project, an organization that provides multimedia resources for economic literacy.

Professor Folbre will speak on "Global Care Work and Android Dreams" as keynote MillerComm speaker for the WGF Fall Symposium on Gender and Transnational Caring Work. Childcare, elder care and other forms of caring work are increasingly being done as paid work involving transnational flows of people. Nannies leave the Philippines or Mexico to work in Hong Kong, Europe and the United States. Japanese citizens may travel to Thailand for elder care. The workers, often women, comprise part of a chain of caring labor that often requires them to find others to watch their own children or aging parents at lower wages. This symposium brings specialists from different fields to explore gender issues of transnational care.

## WGFP SPRING 2004 ACTIVITIES

WGFP thanks all the speakers for our Monday Noon Spring Seminar Series:

**Adhiambo Odoul**, Rockefeller Post-Doctoral Fellow, Center for African Studies, UUC, on "Reflections on processes and prospects of African gender politics: Lessons from the life of Mama Pheobe Muga Asiyo of Kenya";  
**Kumi Silva**, Doctoral Candidate, School of Journalism and Communication, University of Oregon, on "Pastoralized Identities, Global Nationalisms: Emerging Issues in Trans/National Social Movements";

**Lydia Buki**, Assistant Professor, Educational Psychology, UUC, on "Why Do Latina Women Die Faster from Breast Cancer? An Examination of Lives in Context";

**Zohra Belghit**, Graduate Student, Comparative Literature, UUC, on "Moroccan Women's Velvet Revolution: Report on An International Congress in Morocco";

**Radhika Parameswaran**, School of Journalism, Indiana University, on "Globalization, Indian Beauty Queens and Public Culture: The Disappearing Shadows of Poverty and Class Inequality";

**Marianne Ferber**, Professor Emerita, Economics, UUC, on "No Cheers for Belkin's 'Opt-Out Revolution'" (Please see summary of Dr. Ferber's talk on p. 71).

WGFP co-sponsored the following campus events this Spring semester:

**Martin Luther King Jr. Commemorative Symposium**, January 18-24, sponsored by African American Cultural Program and others;  
**Alex Rivera**, "Discussions of Race and Immigration in the Context of the Global Village: The Films of Alex Rivera," February 3, sponsored by Latina/o Studies Program and others;

Donna Gabacio, "Emigrants and Nation Building in Poland and Italy," Feb. 5-6, sponsored by Migration Studies Groups and others.

Robert Hill, "The Remains of the Name," Feb. 23, sponsored by Afro-American Studies and Research Program, Center for African Studies and others.

Fifth Annual Graduate Symposium on Women's and Gender History, March 12-13, sponsored by Department of History and others.

"From Brown to Black and Beyond: Afro-American Studies in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century," April 1-3, sponsored by Afro-American Studies and Research Program and others;

Global Justice Teach-In with Virginia Setshedi and Victor Geronimo, April 5, sponsored by Urban and Regional Planning and Natural Resources and Environmental Sciences and others;

Ervand Abrahamian, "Iranian Politics and U.S. Foreign Policy," April 8, sponsored by Program in South Asian and Middle Eastern Studies.

"Circuits of Style: Musical Interchange Between and Among Africa and the Americas," April 16-17, sponsored by Center for Latin American and Caribbean Studies and others.

Richard Nesbitt, "Geography of Thought," April 21, sponsored by Department of Psychology and others.

Valerie Walkerdine, "Consumption and Narratives of the Feminine Self," April 26, sponsored by Institute of Communications Research and others.

Ayesha Iman, " 'This woman has been sentenced to death by stoning': Media Coverage of Zina Cases in Nigeria," April 29, sponsored by Center for African Studies and others.

"Searching for Democracy: National and Global Perspectives," University YMCA Friday Forum, Fridays at noon.

WGP thanks the Planning Committee and the WGP Executive Committee for their help in organizing the WGP Symposium on Gender and Human Security: Latina/o Immigrants in the Midwest, March 17-18.

## No Cheers for Belkin's "Opt-Out Revolution"

Marianne Ferber

*University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign*

Belkin wrote in 2003 in the Sunday *New York Times Magazine* about well-educated successful women who gave up their careers, or at least interrupted them for a substantial period of time, in order to stay home with their children and emphasizes the happy outcomes of their decision. She further suggests that these women are rejecting the feminist notion of equality among the sexes and are reverting to their "natural role" as homemakers. Since her article was published, *Time* magazine and *Atlantic Monthly* have published essays offering similar views. Not surprisingly, critics have challenged the claim that this is a major trend or that it would be desirable. These are also the issues I address. The evidence that there is a significant trend among successful women to opt for full-time motherhood is considerably less than overwhelming. Although the proportion of employed mothers declined from 61.1% in 1999 to 57.9% in 2002, the proportion of employed fathers also declined from 94.3% to 92.3% during the same years. This leads one to suspect that the decline had more to do with the rise in unemployment (and perhaps with the increasing number of hours professionals are expected to work) than with a sudden upsurge in a desire for full-time motherhood. As for the notion that more mothers withdrawing from the labor market would be good for them, for their children, or for the country, this too is a questionable conclusion. Clearly, a good home is a better environment for children than poor day care. Also, a woman happily married to a man with a good income who devotes herself to making life better for her family and her community may well have a more fulfilling life than one frantically juggling a demanding 70 hour a week job and young children. But one or two children being raised in an affluent suburban household

who are not required to take any responsibilities because their mother takes care of everything are likely to become spoiled brats who think the world revolves around them. The woman will have serious problems if the marriage falls apart, her husband becomes unemployed, or if he dies young without having made adequate provisions for his family. Even if all goes well she will be at a serious disadvantage in finding work commensurate with her abilities and education when she reenters the labor market. As for the community, employed people do almost as much volunteer work as non-employed people and they pay income and payroll taxes while full-time homemakers, who benefit equally from public services and Social Security, do not. In short, there appears to be no major trend to leave the labor force, even among women who could afford to do so. Nor would it be desirable. If we want to improve the lives of children and their parents, we need generous paid parental leaves, good affordable day care, a shorter work week. Beyond that, it is time to give up the notion that children and homemaking are uniquely the responsibility of women.



## NEWS FROM WGCP ASSOCIATES

Sibel Cekiç, PhD GRID student, Sociology, UIUC, presented a paper on "Critical Reflections on the Notion of Civil Society," at Western Social Science Association Conference, Salt Lake City, Utah, April 2004. Her paper on "Resurgence of Civil Society as an Idea and Ideal" has been accepted for presentation at the 3<sup>rd</sup> Annual Hawaii International Conference on Social Sciences in June 2004.

Juanjie Chen, PhD GRID student, Anthropology, UIUC, presented a paper on "The Subversion of Modernity: The 'Feminization' of the Family Planning Program in Contemporary Rural China," at the Annual Meeting of the American Ethnological Society, Atlanta, Georgia, April 22-25, 2004.

Alma Gottlieb, Professor, Anthropology and Gender and Women's Studies, UIUC, has published a book on the ethnography of babies among the Beng people of West Africa, entitled, *The After Life is Where We Come From*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004.

Hsiang-Chieh Lee, PhD GRID student, Sociology, UIUC, presented a paper on "Transnational Imagination in Local Taiwanese business families voyaging between Taiwan and China," at the International Business Conference on Back to Basics: Society for Advancement of Management, March 18-21, 2004 in Baltimore, Maryland.

Paola Leon, PhD GRID student, Social Work and Latin American and Caribbean Studies, won two Foreign Language Area Studies awards – one for the summer and one for the academic year 2004-05 for the study of Quechua. She'll spend six weeks this summer in the "Centro Bartolome de Las Casas" in Cuzco, Peru studying Quechua. Both awards were given by the Center for Latin American and Caribbean Studies.

Laura Ripani, PhD GRID student, Economics, presented a paper

on "Public University Students' Performance in Argentina," at the Education Across the Americas Conference at Columbia University, Graduate Student Conference, March 26-27, New York, NY.

Gillian Stevens, Associate Professor, Sociology, UUC, won the Otis Dudley Duncan Award for Distinguished Scholarship in Social Demography given by the ASA section on the Sociology of Population for her new book, *America's Newcomers and the Dynamics of Diversity*, co-authored with Frank D. Bean, 2003, Russell Sage Foundation, New York.

## CONGRATULATIONS TO OUR STUDENT AWARD WINNERS!

The following students received grants for 2004-2005: (More information on the recipients will be given in our fall newsletter.)

**The Rita and Arnold Goodman Fellowship:**  
JUNJIE CHEN, Anthropology, for work on population policy and reproduction in rural China.

**The Due and Ferber International Research Award for**

**Doctoral Dissertation Research:**

ANGELINA COTLER Anthropology, for work on microfinance

in Peru.

**The Kathleen Cloud International Research Grant:**

JOY WILLIAMS-BLACK, History, for research on external

higher education in Kenya, and

ISIDORE LOBNIBE, Anthropology, for research on migration

and work camps in Ghana.

**Barbara A. Yates International Research Award:**

MEERA MURTHI, Counseling Psychology, for the study of

communal conflict in India.

**WGFP Research Award**

JANE-FRANCES LOBNIBE, Educational Policy Studies, for

research on education in Ghana.