Introduction

- The introduction chapter opens with discussion about this political ad, in which Sharron Angle claims that Harry Reid is “the best friend illegal aliens ever had”
  
  [Link to YouTube video](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uJC_RmcO7Ts)

Sharron Angle’s ad was one of many immigration-related campaign ads from the 2008 elections.

- This ad for David Vitter in Louisiana plays on similar themes and fears
  
  [Link to YouTube video](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9uvp0Jljh6U)

- Have you seen any immigration-related campaign ads? Who or what are we supposed to fear in these ads? How are immigrants characterized? What countries do they come from? What are they doing once they are here?

- What are the different meanings conveyed by the terms “illegal alien” and “unauthorized immigrant”?

- What are the four most common claims or myths prevalent about unauthorized immigrants? What other myths or images are associated with “illegal” immigration?

- The story of Jessica Colotl is featured in the introduction—why do you think Jessica and her parents did not come to the United States with visas or become citizens once they were here?

- Enforcement is one component of any immigration strategy. Do you think Presidents Bush and Obama have done enough in terms of enforcement? Is enforcement the most effective way to deal with the problem of immigration? What alternatives exist?

**Where is Jessica Colotl?**

Jessica became the face of young immigrants who want to attend college and become a part of the American mainstream. As of 2012, Jessica’s case continued to be challenged in courts, but she remained in Georgia. She will be able to benefit from the Deferred Action program announced by the Obama administration in 2012. Do you know who qualifies for this program? Do you know what benefits they qualify for? If you were in Jessica’s position, would you apply for deferred action? Why or why not?

You can learn more about it in this FAQ from the Immigration Policy Center


You can watch an interview with Jessica about Deferred Action here:

[Link to interview](http://www.cbsatlanta.com/story/18800567/jessica-colotl-thrilled-about-new-immigration-policy)
Chapter 1: Why Migrate?

- What are the theories of immigration explained in this chapter?
- Why are migrants more likely to come to the U.S. from certain places and not from others? Do the reasons surprise you? Is it just the wage difference, or are there other factors? What role does development play?
- What would it take for you to migrate? What conditions would motivate you and/or your family to migrate? How would you make the decision to migrate? Who would you consult?
- Why don’t many people from Central America and Mexico simply get in line for visas? Is there a line?
  - The Department of State releases monthly “Visa Bulletins” where they inform the public when the applications that are being currently processed for different visa categories were submitted. Look at the most recent bulletin and find out when the applications of the Mexicans who were granted visas under one of the family categories were originally submitted [http://travel.state.gov/visa/bulletin/bulletin_1360.html](http://travel.state.gov/visa/bulletin/bulletin_1360.html)
- People frequently point out that “my ancestors came here legally” when discussing immigration. Consider the overview of US immigration policy history in this chapter. What has changed? Why is this comparison misleading?

Chapter 2: People in Motion

The Border

- How is the journey through Mexico described by the migrants who have made it? How tough is border and immigration enforcement in Mexico? How effective is enforcement in deterring immigration in Mexico?
- Some people correctly point out that Mexico enforces its immigration laws very harshly, yet we in the United States are not as harsh in our treatment of unauthorized Mexican immigrants—this is an argument that is frequently put forth to advocate harsh immigration enforcement in the US. What is the logic of this argument?
- If a Central American immigrant makes it through Mexico, he or she must then cross the US/Mexico border. We have been increasing border security since the 1990s. What have been the effects of increasing border security? Are more, less, or the same number of people getting through?
- Consider the following charts regarding border enforcement in light of the crossing stories that you read and the brief overview of border-enforcement operations:

![Figure 1: Enforcement budget of the INS, fiscal year 1960–99](http://example.com/image.png)

*SOURCE: Hanson, Schae, Slaughter, and Spilimbergo (2002).*
TABLE 2  Deaths among unauthorized border-crossers, total Southwest border and California, Arizona, and Texas segments of the border, by calendar year, 1994–2000

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<tr>
<td>California</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>147</td>
<td>113</td>
<td>140</td>
<td>1994–2000: 509</td>
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<td>Arizona</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>1996–2000: 1,186</td>
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<td>Texas</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>170</td>
<td>201</td>
<td>269</td>
<td>1996–2000: 1,181</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Southwest border total</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>149</td>
<td>329</td>
<td>358</td>
<td>499</td>
<td>1996–2000: 474</td>
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NOTE: Data are from the Mexican Ministry of Foreign Relations. They include deaths occurring on the Mexican side of the mountains, deserts, canals, and rivers that straddle the Southwest border. For Arizona and Texas, there are no migrant death statistics before 1996. Data drawn from vital statistics registries in US border counties (see Eschbach et al. 1999; Eschbach, Hagan, and Rodriguez 2001a), while providing a longer time series, are an inadequate substitute for the data reported in this table, since they neither identify the immigration status of the decedent nor specify whether death occurred as the result of an attempted illegal entry into the United States.

FIGURE 2  Causes of death among unauthorized border-crossers, Mexico–California border, 1994–2000

NOTE: Data shown exclude unknown-cause cases.

*None of these deaths occurred after 1 October, the date on which Operation Gatekeeper began. See text.

SOURCE: Data from Mexican Consulates.

In light of this information, does it appear that the money the U.S. spends on enforcement is a good investment? What group(s) has(have) made a financial gain from our border-enforcement expenditure?

Have the following increased, decreased or remained the same over the past 25 years?
- Political focus on the US/Mexico border.
- Spending/investment on the US/Mexico border.
- Deaths on the US/Mexico border.
- Profits made by coyotes.
- Level of organization and sophistication of coyotes.
- Number of unauthorized immigrants in the US.
- Amount of time that people have to stay in the US to repay the debt they incurred to migrate.

Crossing or landing?
While the border has become a powerful symbol of unauthorized immigration in the United States, many unauthorized immigrants have never seen the border.

In 2006 the Pew Hispanic Center estimated that up to half of unauthorized immigrants in the United States overstayed their (tourist, student, etc) visas.

How are visa over-stayers different than border-crossers?

New Destinations
- What is a day-laborer? Have you ever seen one? Is there a place in your town where day-laborers congregate?
- What are new destinations? Why did immigrants begin moving to “new destinations”?
- What are the differences between “new” and “gateway” destinations?
  - Use this interactive map from the Pew Hispanic Research Center to visualize the growth of Hispanic populations in “new destinations” over the past 20 years [http://www.pewhispanic.org/2012/03/16/latinos-by-geography/](http://www.pewhispanic.org/2012/03/16/latinos-by-geography/)
- What are some of the hardships that unauthorized immigrants face in “new destinations”? If life is so difficult in new destinations, why do they stay?

Family Life
- What do you think of the “second shift” that Norma describes (p. 82-4)? How is it similar to or different from the domestic lives of most other American working mothers?
- What is a “mixed-status” family?
- The term “anchor baby” is popular in anti-immigrant discourse—what does it mean? What type of “anchor” can US-born children provide for unauthorized parents?
- What are remittances? What are they used for?
- In what ways are remittances changing immigrant-sending communities in Mexico and Guatemala?
- What are social remittances?
- In what ways can immigration affect spousal relationships? In what ways can immigration affect parent-child relationships?
- Why do immigrants form Home Town Associations?
- Do you think that engaging in transnational activities (such as participating in Home Town Associations) poses an obstacle to assimilation? Why/Why not?
- What is Secure Communities?
  - Explore the official USCIS site about secure communities [http://www.ice.gov/secure_communities/](http://www.ice.gov/secure_communities/)
- What is 287(g)?
- Explore the official USCIS site about 287(g) [http://www.ice.gov/news/library/factsheets/287g.htm](http://www.ice.gov/news/library/factsheets/287g.htm)
- Explore a report from the Migration Policy Institute that “assesses the implementation, enforcement outcomes, costs and community impacts” of this program [http://www.migrationpolicy.org/pubs/287g-divergence.pdf](http://www.migrationpolicy.org/pubs/287g-divergence.pdf)
- Who are “criminal aliens”?
- What do you think is a greater obstacle to assimilation: Home Town Associations and transnational connections or 287(g) and Secure Communities?

### Chapter 3: Living Together, Living Apart

- Do you know of any businesses in your area that have undergone the type of change that Jimmy the barber recounts at the beginning of this chapter?
- How does Jimmy feel about the new immigrants? What has the influx of immigrants meant for Jimmy’s business?
- How do the claims that immigrants send a lot of their money back home (p. 112) compare to the description of the Latino-owned businesses in this chapter?
- What government assistance or benefits do unauthorized immigrants qualify for?
- Are immigrants today learning English at rates that are comparable to immigrants who arrived during previous immigration waves?
  - Watch this video of a panel discussion on the findings of the report [http://www.wilsoncenter.org/event/immigrants-the-united-states-how-well-are-they-integrating-society](http://www.wilsoncenter.org/event/immigrants-the-united-states-how-well-are-they-integrating-society)
- Rosita and her family (p. 128-9) are business-owners, participate in American society and are in active pursuit of the American Dream. What is the biggest obstacle to their full assimilation?
- How does the discrimination that Lupe encounters in her everyday life (p.132) affect her ability and her desire to assimilate? If you felt rejected or discriminated against in this manner how do you think you would react?
- What kind of treatment do immigrant

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**Segmented labor markets**

The “segmented labor markets” theory of migration posits that immigrants fill jobs in the secondary area of the labor market. In countries like the United States, there are now fewer traditional blue collar jobs (as manufacturing has moved largely to other parts of the world), but there are more jobs in the service industry. These jobs are often seasonal and low-paying and thus attract a labor force that is highly flexible and willing to work for minimum wages. Immigrants are the ones who fill these jobs.


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**Additive or subtractive assimilation?**

Classical assimilation theory, or straight-line assimilation theory, posits that immigrants are assimilated when they have left behind the culture of their country of origin to fully embrace the culture of their host country. In other words, assimilation is a subtractive process, a zero-sum game in which one must lose identification with a group to gain membership in another. There are also, however, additive theories of assimilation, which explain that one can maintain ties to the country of origin while also becoming culturally fluent in the host country. This is called “Selective acculturation.”

youth receive in Cobb County schools (p.134-6)?

- Why do you think immigrants are so frequently associated with crime? Are immigration offenses, such as being in the United States without authorization, criminal offenses?
- If you were the victim of a crime, how would you report it? Who would you call? How might that decision be different for an unauthorized immigrant in Cobb County? Do you think this makes Cobb County more or less secure?
- As is the case with any other population, there are criminals within the immigrant population. If all unauthorized immigrants, not just the criminals, fear the police and go to great lengths to avoid contact with them, do you think this makes it easier or harder for criminal aliens to hide “in the shadows”?
- Jimmy raises concerns at the end of the chapter (p. 151) that if there were immigration reform, immigrants may be afraid to come forward. Why do you think immigrants might be afraid? Can this hurdle be overcome?

Chapter 4: Picking up the Cross

- Why are churches at the forefront of addressing failures in the national immigration system? What differentiates churches from other institutions in the United States with regards to immigration? Why are churches “unique spaces” (p 158)?
- Historically, have American churches served similar purposes for other populations?
- What skills do immigrants develop in church that are helpful for participation in American civic life?
- What is a “nested congregation”?
- What was lost and what was gained in the “heart transplant” that the Lutheran church underwent? What remained the same? How do celebrations like the Thanksgiving described in the chapter fit into these changes?
- How have the changes regarding immigration enforcement in Cobb County affected the Sagrada Familia Church?
- How does the experience of the first Brazilian immigrants at Ray Thomas compare with the experiences of the first immigrants at Sagrada Familia?
- Do you think Ray Thomas has been successful at its “multicultural ministry”? What do you think it means when the authors describe the aim of the Church as “not to ‘melt’ differences in a melting pot, but to learn about them, engage them [and] worship with them”? Is this compatible with assimilation? Is this similar to the way that past immigrant groups have incorporated into the life of the United States?
- Can you think of other “spaces of encounter” (p. 178)? Are there any such spaces in your community?
- In the story recounted on pp. 179-180, PJ helps Emmanuel in many ways, but how does Emmanuel help PJ? What opportunities does Emmanuel provide for PJ?
- The SINE program described in this chapter can be seen as a way to rejuvenate a Church, but it can also be seen as a challenge to the identity of the Church— is there room for SINE in between rejuvenation and challenge?

Cobb County, GA

Cobb County has seen the size of its Hispanic immigrant population increase exponentially over the past fifteen years. According to the Pew Hispanic Center, “Cobb County has the typical profile of a new Latino settlement in the South.” Cobb County is also one of the toughest places for unauthorized immigrants in the South to live. Cobb County Sheriff Neil Warren has been named one of “America’s Top 10 ‘Toughest’ Immigration Sheriffs” and is praised by anti-immigrant groups for his stance.


See data about the Hispanic growth in Cobb County here: http://www.pewhispanic.org/2005/07/26/appendix-5-county-level-supplemental-tables/
Is the Biblical idea of being “your brother’s keeper” contradictory to American values of independence, self-reliance? How does PJ reconcile these?

Assimilation is a two-way-street, but prejudice can be too. PJ explains that Nestor’s wife “couldn’t believe that Americans even care at all.” What experiences could have led her to believe that? How has she been able to change her mind, or overcome her prejudice?

The leaders of St. Thomas explained that their pilgrimage to bring attention to the plight of unauthorized immigrants was not a political action, but rather a chance “to pray with your feet” (p. 200). Do you consider the pilgrimage and foot-washing a political action? Can communities of faith engage with the issue of unauthorized immigration without also engaging in a political dialogue? If Ray Thomas had not taken up the issue of unauthorized immigration despite the growing number of unauthorized immigrants in their congregation, would the lack of engagement itself be a political statement?

**Justice for Immigrants Campaign**

Although Churches of many denominations have spoken out in favor of humane immigration reform and in defense of unauthorized immigrants, the Catholic Church has been at the forefront of this movement. The United States Council of Catholic Bishops states its official position regarding immigration as follows: “The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) opposes "enforcement only" immigration policies and supports comprehensive immigration reform. In Strangers No Longer: Together on the Journey of Hope, the U.S. Catholic Bishops outlined the elements of their proposal for comprehensive immigration reform. These include: earned legalization, future worker program, family-based immigration reform, restoration of due process rights, addressing root causes and enforcement.”

To follow through with their stance on immigration, the Church launched the Justice for Immigrants Campaign. The objectives of this campaign are:

- To educate the public, especially the Catholic community, including Catholic public officials, about Church teaching on migration and immigrants;
- To create political will for positive immigration reform;
- To enact legislative and administrative reforms based on the principles articulated by the bishops; and
- To organize Catholic networks to assist qualified immigrants obtain the benefits of the reforms.

To achieve these objectives, the Justice for Immigrants Campaign provides tools for parishes, including Bible-based materials to support humane immigration reform that priests and pastors can use.


Learn more about the Justice for Immigrants Campaign and access relevant materials here: [http://www.justiceforimmigrants.org](http://www.justiceforimmigrants.org)

Learn more about ecumenical advocacy for immigrants here: [http://www.pbs.org/wnet/religionandethics/week1042/feature.html](http://www.pbs.org/wnet/religionandethics/week1042/feature.html)

**Chapter 5: Migrants Mobilize**

- What do you understand by “the politics of fear” (p. 206)? Who is afraid? The native born? The immigrants? What are the consequences of their fears?

**El Sol**

- What is the mission of El Sol? According to its mission, who is El Sol’s primary constituency?
Browse El Sol’s website, learn about its programs, take a look at some of their newsletters and their latest annual report to learn more about the organization:
www.friendsofelsol.org

- What sort of complaints did the residents of Jupiter have about the day-laborers before El Sol opened?
- What real dangers were Jupiter residents facing? What real dangers were the day-laborers in Jupiter facing?
- Who were the members of the “coalition of support” for Jupiter’s migrants?
- Who were the groups in opposition to the idea of opening a center?
- How has El Sol addressed the initial set of complaints that people had about day-laborers in Jupiter? Have they been successful?
- The El Sol Jupiter’s Neighborhood Resource Center has been featured in a variety of media:
  - *Brother Towns*, a documentary about the transnational community that exists between Jupiter and Jacaltenango, Guatemala http://brothertowns.com/
  - *Jupiter or Bust: The El Sol Story*, grand prize winner of the 2007 CSPAN Student Cam. This 5-minute documentary was made by students at Jupiter High School http://www.c-spanvideo.org/program/Jupiter-Or-Bust

- What sort of complaints do the Saturday-protestors have about El Sol? How are they different from the complaints raised by Jupiter residents in the early 2000s?

**Alterna**

- What is an “intentional Christian community”?
- What is Alterna’s mission?
  - Visit Alterna’s website and find out about its mission and its members http://www.alternacommunity.com/
- What are the two different sets of fears that Anton talks about (p. 224)?
- What do you think that the members of Alterna

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**FAIR: The Federation for American Immigration Reform**

The Federation for American Immigration Reform, or FAIR, is the largest national anti-immigrant organization. FAIR vehemently opposes day-labor sites. While FAIR focuses its efforts on unauthorized immigration, FAIR seeks to decrease all immigration. FAIR “advocates a temporary moratorium on all immigration except spouses and minor children of U.S. citizens and a limited number of refugees.” Though FAIR representatives frequently speak in media outlets and have also testified before both houses of Congress, the Southern Poverty Law Center has identified FAIR as a hate group. FAIR has been linked to the Pioneer Fund (which funds eugenics research), and important members of FAIR have links to white-supremacist groups.

See the Southern Poverty Law Center’s investigation about FAIR: www.splcenter.org/get-informed/intelligence-report/browse-all-issues/2007/winter/the-teflon-nativists

See the FAIR website: www.fairus.org

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**Lost in Detention**

Maria Hinojosa’s investigative report for Frontline, *Lost in Detention*, aired in October of 2011. *Lost in Detention* details an immigration detention system rife with abuse. Because detainees are held on civil immigration charges, they do not have guaranteed access to an attorney or other rights accorded to criminal defendants in federal prisons. In 2009 there were at least 30 private immigrant detention facilities operating in the United States with minimal oversight by ICE. A recent lawsuit by the ACLU listed almost 200 allegations of sexual abuse in immigrant detention facilities; twelve of these took place in Florida detention centers.

You can watch *Lost in Detention* here: www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/lost-in-detention/

The Detention Watch Network is an organization that keeps an eye on violations in detention centers: http://detentionwatchnetwork.org/

Amnesty International also released a report about immigrant detention in the United States. You can access it here: http://www.amnestyusa.org/pdfs/JailedWithoutJustice.pdf
mean when they speak of “fearless love”?

- Where does Alterna get its name?
- What events spurred the creation of Alterna?
- What kind of impact have programs like 287(g) and Secure Communities had on the prison industry in the United States? In turn, how has the prison industry influenced anti-immigrant legislation?
- Anton and Ramona express their disappointment with the low level of support their community receives from the church—what is the source of this tension? Why would the pastor remove flyers from the church?

**Trail of Dreams**

- What is the DREAM Act?
- Read about the stories of several DREAMers who are “coming out” as unauthorized and learn about the organization of the DREAM Activist Network [http://www.dreamactivist.org/](http://www.dreamactivist.org/)
- Is making in-state tuition rates available to unauthorized immigrants providing them with an unfair advantage over the US-born students of the same state?
  - Can unauthorized students apply for financial aid through the Free Application for Federal Student Aid?
- What social movements inspired the “Trail of Dreams”? What techniques do Dream Activists borrow from the different social movements that inspire them?
- Why do you think young, US-educated people are willing to put themselves at risk of deportation by bringing attention to their cause? What does this stance imply about their commitment to and belief in American values?
- If DREAMers are US-raised, English-speaking, law-abiding young people, what is the threat that remains? What fear do they rouse in portions of the US public that have thus far prevented the passage of the DREAM Act?
  - Read about Deferred Action, announced by the Obama administration in 2012 (see the sidebox about Jessica Colotl for some helpful places to begin your research).
    - How is Deferred Action different from the DREAM Act?
    - If you were a DREAMer, would you take advantage of Deferred Action? What risks would you be taking?
- El Sol, Alterna and the Trail of Dreams all “seek to overcome the politics of fear and to promote change in an immigration system that trades in the currency of fear,” but they vary in their size, scope and general approach. Which of these approaches do you think is most effective?
- Which do you see as holding more promise for moving the immigration debate forward in the U.S.?
- How do each of the approaches discussed in this chapter fit within the framework of American civil society and participatory democracy? Are any (or all) of these movements un-American?

**Conclusion**

- The United States is both “A nation of laws” and “A nation of immigrants”—How can unauthorized immigrants fit within this narrative?
• Has the “enforcement-first and immigration reform later” strategy been successful? Why or why not? In your opinion, is the US any closer to comprehensive immigration reform today than it was in the year 2000?

• What is “attrition through enforcement”? What impact has it had on the lives of the people featured in this book? Has it had the intended effect? What unintended effects has it had?

• How does the implementation of attrition through enforcement limit the ability and/or willingness of immigrants to “come out of the shadows”?


• What are the four moral principles offered here to guide humane immigration reform? What are the principles currently guiding the immigration policy conversation in the country? How do they differ?

• Do you think that the immigration reform imagined in this conclusion is politically feasible? Is it a simple proposal? Some argue that we should just “deport them all,” is that proposal more or less feasible? Is it simpler?

• What would be the consequences of mass-deportation? How would it impact stability in Central America and Mexico? Labor markets in the United States? New destination communities in the U.S.?

• Would mass deportation solve the immigration problem more effectively than the proposal offered in this conclusion?

• Is the type of reform proposed here “amnesty”? 