

News: Press Releases

Tipsheet: IU experts for Hispanic Heritage Month

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A de facto guest worker system involving undocumented Latino immigrants benefits many communities, but is breaking down because of a number of factors, according to Jorge Chapa, professor and director of Latino Studies at Indiana University Bloomington. In a forthcoming book, Chapa argues that undocumented Mexican immigration to the United States creates a guest worker program that allows many employers to fill what are often less than attractive jobs. He cites several factors that are causing this system to break down, including current economic problems, increased unemployment, post-Sept. 11 concerns about secure identities, a number of contradictory state and local laws and court decisions regarding drivers licenses, consular ID cards, tax ID numbers, college tuition and the costs of health care and other public services. "This de facto system has worked to the benefit of many employers, but to the disadvantage of others, including immigrants themselves, who are limited in many ways because of their unauthorized status," Chapa said. "Employers benefited from the unproblematic availability of reliable workers who would do onerous work for low wages." The population of undocumented Latino immigrants grew throughout the 1990s, especially during the economic boom between 1997 and 2000. "We believe that our research makes a strong case for documenting the immigrants," Chapa said. He said the research supports legalizing or regularizing the status of immigrants so that they can live, work and drive in the United States. "The ongoing flow of undocumented workers from Mexico and the rest of Latin America to the U.S. is a disgrace," he said. "It leads to their exploitation, lack of enforcement of labor and safety laws, low wages, the growth of the working poor and many other negative effects." Chapa can be reached at 812-856-1795 or jchapa@iana.edu.

Primary and secondary school educators in Indiana and throughout the Midwest face a new problem as a population of Latino children grows steadily around them: Latino parents may not get involved in their children's educations the way state educators intend. A two-year research project, led by IU School of Education Professor Gerardo Lopez and now underway, will determine how Latino parents navigate what may seem to them a confusing and overwhelming educational system. Lopez believes that observed study and a broad survey will help policy makers and educators close communication and behavior gaps between school systems and Latino parents, many of whom are recent arrivals to the United States. The study is currently being conducted in Marion, Lake, Elkhart, Dubois and Allen (Ind.) counties, though Lopez and his team may expand the research to include schools in other Latino-impacted Indiana counties. To speak with Lopez, call 317-882-3602 or e-mail lopezg@indiana.edu (e-mail is preferred for initial contact).

Today, Latin American music must not be understood as a sphere belonging to a culture foreign to the United States, but rather as a significant component of contemporary America, according to Ricardo Lorenz, internationally acclaimed composer and the visiting associate director of IU's Latin American Music Center. "I became sharply aware of this fact after living and working in the city of Chicago for the past 11 years," Lorenz said. "The truth is

that performing or lecturing about Latin American music means bringing to the forefront one cultural component belonging to more than 10 percent of the nation's population. And yet, this music is not only for Hispanics." The Venezuelan native said there are dozens of examples that show how much Latin American music genres, whether classical, folk or popular, have directly impacted music in the United States and, indirectly, the hearts and souls of Americans born in this country. They include Louis Moreau Gottschalk's El Cocoye, an 1853 song influenced by Afro-Cuban music, Ritchie Valens' classic La Bamba, Stevie Wonder's Don't You Worry 'Bout A Thing, which includes a piano pattern typical of Cuban dance music, and Simon & Garfunkel's best-selling album Bridge Over Troubled Water, which features a cover of the 1913 song El Condor Pasa by Peruvian composer Daniel Alomía Robles. "One does not have to go south of the border to appreciate the richness inherent in the music of Latin America," Lorenz added. "Visit the Pilsen or Humboldt neighborhoods in Chicago, or go to East Los Angeles, to the Bronx in New York, Little Havana in Miami, or to El Paso, Texas." Lorenz said that important American music institutions are becoming increasingly aware of this reality and praised pioneering efforts, such as the Chicago Symphony Orchestra's "Armonia" (Harmony) program and IU's Latin American Music Center, that are designed to introduce audiences to exciting Latino musicians. Lorenz can be reached at 812-855-2991 or rieloren@indiana.edu.

In this global economy, many multinational firms continue to fail to prepare their managers to work with locals in other cultures where manufacturing operations and facilities are located, said P. Roberto Garcia, clinical associate professor of international business in IU's Kelley School of Business. "One big mistake that's made is to assume that things function pretty much as they would in the United States ... that culture is not a big deal," said Garcia, who is also director of the school's Global Experience Academy. He is amazed, but not surprised, that very few companies in 2003 adequately prepare their executives for overseas assignments. "It would seem pretty obvious, but it's an issue that poses constant challenges." Garcia said many American executives fail by becoming judgmental rather than trying to understand how the system functions in the land where they have been assigned. They need to appreciate that there is a framework for understanding cultural differences, he added. Garcia has worked as a consultant for several U.S. and European firms, including Philips, AT&T and Alcoa, and has done executive training for Chrysler Corp. and General Motors. He also has written about organizational learning and competitiveness in Mexico's automotive industry and efforts there by Ford, Nissan and Volkswagen. He can be reached at 812-855-2744 or prgarcia@indiana.edu.

Thirty years ago, IUB opened the doors to its Latino Cultural Center, La Casa. According to Lillian Casillas, the current director of La Casa, the center has been consistently compared to other leading Latino programs and initiatives. Its mission continues to be to help Latino/a students succeed through educational and social programs that offer historical, political and cultural awareness about their culture. On Sept. 26, La Casa will begin a three-day celebration of the center's 30th anniversary. The celebration will include a number of workshops, award presentations, tours and the Festival Latino music concert. A highlight of the celebration will be the First Annual Latino Alumni Reunion on Sept. 27. A complete news release has been prepared about La Casa and its celebration, which is available at <http://newsinfo.iu.edu>. Casillas can be reached at 812-855-0174 or at mlcasill@indiana.edu.

Related Information

Media Contacts:

George Vlahakis
IU Media Relations
gvlahaki@indiana.edu
812-855-0846

Ryan Piurek
IU Media Relations
rpiurek@indiana.edu
812-855-5393

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Webmaster: iuaaweb@indiana.edu

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