



The **Opportunity** Agenda

*Building the National Will  
to Expand Opportunity in America*

Media Content Analysis:

# *Public Discourse on Immigration*

- ▶ A Scan of Print and Broadcast Media Coverage in 2008–2009
- ▶ A Scan of Web 2.0 Coverage in Summer of 2009

# Acknowledgments

This report was made possible in part by grants from Unbound Philanthropy and the Carnegie Corporation of New York. General operating support was provided by the Ford Foundation and the Open Society Institute. The statements made and views expressed are solely the responsibility of the authors.

Loren Siegel and Micky Hingorani performed the research and writing of this report. Thanks to Emma Dorsey and Sumbul Siddiqui for their assistance. Eleni Delimpaltadaki provided project oversight. Eric Mueller, of Element Group, designed the report, which was printed using green friendly materials at Fine Print NYC.

# About The Opportunity Agenda

The Opportunity Agenda was founded in 2004 with the mission of building the national will to expand opportunity in America. Focused on moving hearts, minds and policy over time, the organization works closely with social justice organizations, leaders, and movements to advocate for solutions that expand opportunity for everyone. Through active partnerships, The Opportunity Agenda uses communications and media to understand and influence public opinion; synthesizes and translates research on barriers to opportunity and promising solutions; and identifies and advocates for policies that improve people's lives. To learn more about The Opportunity Agenda, go to our website at [www.opportunityagenda.org](http://www.opportunityagenda.org).

The Opportunity Agenda is a project of Tides Center.

# Table of Contents

## **PART I - Print and Broadcast Media Coverage**

<b>Executive Summary</b> .....	<b>3</b>
<b>Introduction</b> .....	<b>5</b>
<b>The Public Opinion Landscape for Immigration Reform</b> .....	<b>6</b>
<b>Search Methodology for Media Scans</b> .....	<b>10</b>
<b>Mainstream Print Media</b> .....	<b>11</b>
<b>A. Topic Summaries</b> .....	<b>12</b>
<b>B. Analysis: The Dominant Media Frame</b> .....	<b>18</b>
<b>Progressive Media</b> .....	<b>20</b>
<b>African American Media</b> .....	<b>22</b>
<b>The Conservative Narrative</b> .....	<b>22</b>
<b>Findings</b> .....	<b>24</b>
<b>Recommendations</b> .....	<b>25</b>
<b>Conclusion</b> .....	<b>28</b>
<b>Appendix</b> .....	<b>29</b>

## **PART II - Immigration Web 2.0 Coverage**

<b>Executive Summary</b> .....	<b>31</b>
<b>Social Networks</b> .....	<b>33</b>
<b>YouTube</b> .....	<b>35</b>
<b>Blogs</b> .....	<b>37</b>
<b>Twitter</b> .....	<b>39</b>
<b>Recommendations</b> .....	<b>40</b>
<b>Conclusions</b> .....	<b>42</b>
<b>Talking About Immigration</b> .....	<b>43</b>
<b>Appendix A</b> .....	<b>44</b>



# PART I: Print and Broadcast Media Coverage

## Executive Summary:

Recent public opinion research points to broad support for “comprehensive immigration reform.” Longitudinal surveys show increasing support for a path to citizenship for undocumented immigrants, and there has been an increase in the perception that immigration reform would benefit the U.S. economy by converting millions of undocumented workers into taxpayers.

Yet media coverage, narratives, and discourse do not always mirror public opinion, even as they influence it. How can immigrant rights advocates set the media frame for the upcoming contentious debate to reflect our nation’s values, shore up public support for comprehensive reform, and minimize the impact of the anti-immigrant opposition? To help answer these questions The Opportunity Agenda commissioned this analysis of the content of media coverage of immigrants and immigration in America.

Communications specialist Loren Siegel scanned a total of 12 mainstream print media outlets and analyzed 70 articles between November 2008 and July 2009. The scan also included relevant content in six magazines and nine radio and television programs whose target audiences are progressives, African Americans, or conservatives.

We conclude that the dominant media frame on immigration is formed by two narratives. First, the American immigration system is still broken, and enforcement of that broken system is producing consequences that undermine American values of fairness, family, and community; second, solutions are elusive. The anti-immigrant message—equating “comprehensive reform” with “amnesty” and playing on the fear that immigrants are taking jobs away from citizens during an economic recession—is receiving less coverage than in the past, and when included, the message is fragmented.

Based on this sample, immigrant rights advocates do not appear to be active participants in the policy discourse. This finding underscores the importance of aggressively seeking out opportunities to communicate “workable solutions” while exercising message discipline. The immigration issue has not been prominently featured in progressive or African American media in recent months, and liberal talk show hosts are not carrying forward a reform message.

The stage is set for a serious, values-based, and solution-oriented national conversation about reform. Although labeled “thorny” by the media, the immigration issue is less toxic than it was in 2007, and mainstream journalists are open to constructive solutions and discourse.

## Strategic recommendations for advocates:

- ▶ Tap into one of the mainstream media’s current narratives—the system is broken and its continuing enforcement is producing consequences that are inconsistent with American values—by pitching stories that expose unfairness and cruelty, explain the legal obstacles that prevent undocumented workers from becoming “legal,” show the futility of the conservative “attrition through enforcement”<sup>1</sup> strategy, and give immigrants a voice.
- ▶ When pitching stories of individual immigrants, advocates need to make sure that these stories are framed to focus on the system and its failures, as opposed to the individual. The systemic frame can motivate target audiences to see policy changes, rather than individual behavior, as the solution to the immigration problem.
- ▶ Place op-eds by economists who can argue persuasively that immigration reform will help the economy.
- ▶ Exercise message discipline by consistently framing conversations and responses to reporters about immigration with the core narrative developed by The Opportunity Agenda and other social justice leaders: *We need workable solutions that uphold our nation’s values and move us forward together.*
- ▶ Reach out to journalists who publish in progressive print media and help them shape stories that carry the core narrative and lay out the movement’s vision for reform.
- ▶ Pitch immigration as a progressive issue that progressive talk show hosts should spotlight so that they can provide a reliable platform for positive messages and lay out the solution. In addition, leverage existing pieces of progressive coverage of immigration.
- ▶ Pitch stories and opinion pieces to African American outlets that assuage economic fears by demonstrating how the current system drives down wages for all low-income Americans.

---

1. “Attrition through enforcement” is the strategy being promoted by the Center for Immigration Studies and other anti-immigrant advocates as a “third way” of resolving the immigration problem (i.e., neither legalization nor mass deportation). They define attrition through enforcement as the “consistent, across the board enforcement” of current immigration laws, which, over time, they claim will lead to a permanent “shrinkage” in the numbers of people here illegally.

# Introduction

In our first media analysis, “Framing Immigrant Integration,” covering 2004–2006, we concluded that the dominant media frame was formed by two narratives: (1) the immigrant striver who by dint of hard work overcomes the odds to achieve the American Dream; and (2) the immigrant “problem” (i.e., the “tidal wave of ‘illegals’ pouring over the border”).

In our second media analysis, “The Evolution of Public Discourse on Immigration: 2006–2007,” which was completed shortly after the acrimonious congressional debate over comprehensive immigration reform, we observed that the media’s narrative about immigration had evolved to underscore the chasm between real life in 21<sup>st</sup> century America and the divisive policy debate “on the Hill.” According to this narrative, evident in both editorial and news coverage, immigrants were an integral part of the 21<sup>st</sup> century American reality and fixing our broken immigration policy is a national priority, but shrill partisanship prevented our elected leaders from solving this problem.

We also found, however, that whereas the anti-immigrant movement had a clear core narrative with two elements—law and order and overwhelming scarcity of resources—the pro-immigrant movement lacked a core narrative as reflected in media discourse.

With a renewed debate over immigration policy on the horizon, we present here a new look at the public discourse as measured by media coverage, and we made a new series of strategic communications recommendations for policy reform advocates. Specifically, we had four research goals:

1. To determine how media discourse has evolved since our two previous media scans and identify the big takeaway themes.
2. To discover if the conservative core narrative is still dominant in the mainstream media.
3. To investigate what progressives and African Americans, in particular, are reading, hearing, and seeing through media targeting those audiences.
4. To determine openings for the core narrative developed by immigration reform advocates in consultation with The Opportunity Agenda: *We need workable solutions that uphold our nation’s values and move us forward together.*

To find answers, we developed a research protocol consisting of a review of recent public opinion research and three separate media scans:

1. Mainstream print media;
2. Print media targeting white progressives and print media targeting African Americans;
3. Broadcast media targeting white progressives, African Americans, or conservative Americans.

# The Public Opinion Landscape For Immigration Reform

Recent polling on the immigration issue indicates broad support for comprehensive reform that crosses party, regional, gender, and racial or ethnic lines. Looking at two key indicators—support for a path to citizenship and perceptions about the link between immigration and the economy—it appears that *if* key audiences can be *actively* engaged, the opposition will face an uphill battle in thwarting reform.

## Increase in support for path to citizenship

Several longitudinal surveys show increasing support for a path to citizenship for undocumented immigrants. According to a Washington Post/ABC News poll, support for citizenship has gone up nine percent since 2007:

	Support	Oppose
June 2007	52%	44%
April 2009	61%	35%

Would you support or oppose a program giving illegal immigrants now living in the United States the right to live here legally if they pay a fine and meet other requirements?

Washington Post/ABC News Poll  
April 21-24, 2009  
N = 1,072 adults

A *New York Times*/CBS News poll indicates that there has been a small increase in support for a pathway to citizenship when the public is asked to choose among three policy options. A plurality of the overall population and a majority of African Americans support this option. The same poll shows a drop in support for the “guest worker” option and little change in the percentage supporting deportation:

Which comes closest to your view about illegal immigrants who are currently working in the U.S.: (1) They should be allowed to stay in their jobs, and to eventually apply for U.S. citizenship; or (2) They should be allowed to stay in their jobs only as temporary guest workers, but not to apply for U.S. citizenship; or (3) They should be required to leave their jobs and leave the U.S.

	Stay and apply	Stay as guest workers	Leave
December 2007	38%	28%	28%
April 2009	44%	21%	30%
White	40%	21%	35%
Black	55%	18%	19%

The New York Times/CBS News Poll  
 April 22-26, 2009  
 N = 973 adults  
 Whites = 701  
 Blacks = 212

The Pew Research Center for the People & the Press Values Survey shows the same upward trajectory in support for citizenship:

Thinking about immigrants who are currently living in the U.S. illegally, do you favor or oppose providing a way for illegal immigrants currently in the country to gain legal citizenship if they pass background checks, pay fines and have jobs?

	Favor	Oppose
December 2007	58%	35%
May 2009	63%	34%

The Pew Research Center for the People & the Press  
 2009 Values Survey  
 March 31-April 21, 2009  
 N = 3,013

An in-depth poll conducted in May 2009 by the Benenson Strategy Group showed broad support for “comprehensive immigration reform” and overwhelming support for a path to citizenship with conditions:

Do you strongly support, somewhat support, somewhat oppose, strongly oppose Congress passing comprehensive immigration reform?

Strongly support	31%	
Somewhat support	33%	<b>Total = 64%</b>
Somewhat oppose	10%	
Strongly oppose	10%	

continued

One version of immigration reform that people have discussed would take a comprehensive approach. It would secure the border, crack down on employers who hire illegal immigrants, and require illegal immigrants to register for legal immigration status, pay back taxes, and learn English in order to be eligible for U.S. citizenship.

Strongly support	58%	
Somewhat support	28%	<b>Total = 86%</b>
Somewhat oppose	6%	
Strongly oppose	7%	

*Benenson Strategy Group  
May 9-12, 2009  
N = 1,000 likely voters*

## Increase in perception that reform would benefit the economy

In November 2008, immediately after the election and relatively early in the economic meltdown, a survey of voters by Lake Research Partners found that in the tough economic climate, voters were more interested in converting undocumented workers into legal taxpayers than deporting them to preserve American jobs:

Which is closer to how you think about the issue of immigration and this economy:

(1) We would be better off if people who are in the U.S. illegally became legal taxpayers so they pay their fair share. (2) We would be better off if people who are in the U.S. illegally left the country because they are taking away jobs that Americans need.

Become legal taxpayers	62%
Leave the country	21%

*Lake Research Partners  
November 5-9, 2008  
N = 1,000 general election voters*

Six months later, the Benenson Strategy Group found that support for converting undocumented workers into taxpayers had increased by nine percent:

Which is closer to how you think about the issue of immigration and this economy

(1) We would be better off if people who are in the U.S. illegally left the country because they are taking away jobs that Americans need. (2) We would be better off if people who are in the U.S. illegally became legal taxpayers so they pay their fair share.

Leave the country	26%
Become legal taxpayers	71%

*Benenson Strategy Group  
May 9-12, 2009  
N = 1,000 likely voters*

## Attitudes among white progressive, African American, and U.S.-born Latino voters

In 2008 The Opportunity Agenda worked with more than 150 immigrant rights leaders to map out a proactive and unified “core narrative” that advocates could use to guide their public statements about the need for comprehensive reform. (A core narrative is not a message or slogan but, rather, an overarching “big story” rooted in shared values and priorities.) Each of the elements of the pro-immigrant core narrative—(1) workable solutions; that (2) uphold our nation’s values; and (3) move us forward together—represent a set of ideas about, respectively, pragmatism, national principles, and progress through cooperation. A range of differing messages for different audiences can and should fit within the three narratives. The outcome of this process was an agreement to craft messages consistent with the overarching narrative of promoting *workable solutions that uphold our nation’s values and move us forward together*.

The Opportunity Agenda commissioned Lake Research Partners in May 2009 to test the new core narrative in a series of focus groups. Eight focus groups were held in Seattle, Chicago, Richmond, and New York among three key audiences: progressive whites, African Americans, and U.S.-born Latinos. The extended narrative presented to each group was as follows:

When it comes to immigration, we need workable solutions that uphold our nation’s values and move us forward together. We need to fix our system so that individuals who contribute and participate can live in the United States legally. That means creating a system where undocumented immigrants can register, get legal, learn English, and apply for citizenship.

The focus group findings include the following:

- ▶ The atmosphere for immigration issues is “less toxic” than in past years. Voters in these groups are in a **problem- and solution-oriented frame of mind**. They will dismiss any message that does not have at least a kernel of a specific solution, and they shy away from combative or confrontational language. These groups have “taken to heart the consensus-building tone fostered by President Obama.” Although they may lack specific information about how the immigration system works, they are aware that it has major problems and use words like “inadequate,” “in shambles,” “insane,” and “broken” to describe it. They want a comprehensive solution soon, and they recognize that compromise will be necessary.
- ▶ For a reformed immigration system, these audiences believe that **the system should reflect fairness (for Americans and immigrants) and equality and should encourage immigrants who are committed to becoming Americans**.
- ▶ **Certain facts** that reveal the current system’s unfairness **reinforce the perception that the system is broken**. For example, many voters incorrectly believe that undocumented immigrants can go to a government office and “get legal.” When informed that it would take 34 years to deport all illegal immigrants and that there is no way for undocumented immigrants to become legal, their negative preconceptions about the current system and their support for comprehensive reform are reinforced.
- ▶ **Their attitudes toward immigrants are mixed**. On the one hand, they believe immigrants are hard-working and “they laud legal immigrants for bringing diversity and exemplifying the American dream.” On the other hand, they, like most of the public, complain about the strain on public services, especially health care.
- ▶ **There was consistent support across all groups for “comprehensive reform”** and they liked the tested proposal because “it sets up a process and re-establishes order on a system that voters believe to be out of control.” Their criticisms of the proposal were constructive (e.g., requiring that immigrants “remain employed” to qualify for citizenship might be unrealistic during a

recession). Once it is established that immigrants will take part in a legal process in which they will pay taxes and contribute to the social safety net, “resistance to immigrants receiving benefits...drops significantly.”

- ▶ **The most successful messages tested were those that enumerated the steps of a comprehensive solution.** “The core narrative of The Opportunity Agenda is a successful example of this, emphasizing workable solutions that uphold our values and move us forward together.”
- ▶ **Among these audiences, the strongest messenger is President Obama.**

This brief overview of opinion research makes clear that, if anything, the economic downturn that intensified in 2008 has deepened Americans’ preference for comprehensive immigration reform over mass deportation. That preference is lopsided and cuts across demographic groups. Proponents of comprehensive reform can proceed with the knowledge that the public largely supports their goals.

# Search Methodology For Media Scans

## Mainstream Print Media

Electronic searches were performed using the Lexis Nexis database. We conducted a Boolean search of 12 print media outlets (see Appendix for the list of outlets) using the following search terms:

Immigration OR immigrant AND  
reform OR illegal OR Obama OR economy OR legislation OR raids OR rights OR deportation  
OR comprehensive

The time period covered was November 5, 2008 to July 10, 2009. The search terms returned 1,155 articles. We applied a random sequence generator to select a large sample of articles from which approximately 75 usable articles could be culled. The final number of articles included in the scan came to 70.

## Mainstream Broadcast Media

All of the broadcast media included in this survey have searchable websites and store previously aired programs and transcripts on their websites (see Appendix). Each website was searched using the term “immigration reform” for the period March 1–July 1, 2009. Every program generated by the search was reviewed for usability, and 13 made the cut.

## Print Media with White Progressive or African American Audiences

Electronic searches were performed using the Lexis Nexis database. We conducted a Boolean search of six outlets (see Appendix) using the same search terms and time period we used for the mainstream outlets. The search yielded 30 articles, of which four were deemed usable. Periodicals were chosen based on their self-identified target audiences and circulation size.

# Mainstream Print Media

We read each article and found that the most common subject matter by far was federal enforcement of current immigration laws and that the story these articles told was of a system in trouble. Somewhat surprisingly, the link between immigration and the faltering economy was not a frequent focus. The question of policy reform was dormant until mid-June, when President Obama announced he planned to hold a “working session on immigration reform” with lawmakers. The articles fell into eight distinct categories:

Topic	Number of stories
Federal Enforcement	35
Immigration and the Economy	7
Anti-Immigrant Rules	6
Policy Reform	6
Immigrants and Crime	5
Immigrant Integration	5
Mixed Family Status	3
Hate Crimes	3

## A. TOPIC SUMMARIES

### Federal Enforcement (35)

Close to one-half of the selected articles focused on forms of federal enforcement such as workplace raids and detention; the majority reported on significant problems with these efforts.

#### Workplace Raids

This group of articles reflected ongoing controversy over the wisdom and legality of workplace raids:

- ▶ A brief piece in *USA Today* reported that “the target of one of the largest immigration raids in U.S. history,” the Agriprocessors kosher-meat plant in Postville, Iowa, had filed for Chapter 11 bankruptcy: “The aftermath [of the raid in which 389 workers were detained], observers say, has disrupted the kosher-meat supply and threatened the town’s future. ‘This town would be in a world of hurt if that plant closed,’ said Jeff Mott, owner of a local hardware store.” (*USA Today*, “Raid takes bite out of kosher-meat supply; Processor struggles after U.S. sweeps up illegal immigrants,” November 13, 2008).
- ▶ An article in the *Los Angeles Times* reported on an immigration court ruling that Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) agents had failed to follow their own regulations when they detained a worker without reasonable suspicion that he was an illegal immigrant. The article quotes the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) of Southern California attorney who represented the worker: “We’re very pleased that the rights of the Van Nuys workers were vindicated. The decision sends a message to ICE that it cannot disregard the rights of the people that it targets.” (*Los Angeles Times*, “Immigration case dismissed,” February 21, 2009).
- ▶ A brief piece in the *San Francisco Chronicle* reported that House Speaker Nancy Pelosi “joined hundreds of families at a church in San Francisco’s Mission District demanding an end to immigration raids and deportations that separate parents from children.” Also quoted were Illinois Congressman Luis Gutierrez (“We cannot wait any longer for fair and just immigration reform”) and Ivan Torres, a 9-year-old boy from San Jose (“If my father is deported, who will pay the bills? Who will take care of me and my two sisters? We need to keep families together.”). (*San Francisco Chronicle*, March 8, 2009).
- ▶ A *Boston Globe* article announced the decision by Homeland Security Secretary Janet Napolitano to delay a series of proposed immigration raids at U.S. workplaces: “Napolitano’s moves foreshadow the difficult political decisions the Obama administration faces as it decides whether to continue mass arrests of illegal immigrant workers in sweeps of meatpackers, construction firms, defense contractors and other employers.” The article quoted Cardinal Francis George, who spoke at a rally in Chicago and called on the government “to end immigration raids and the separation of families. Reform would be a clear sign this administration is truly about change.” The last word went to Ali Noorani of the National Immigration Forum, who “said that groups such as his support Obama’s focus on going after bad employers and criminal illegal immigrants first, or as he said it, prioritizing ‘drug smugglers, not window washers.’” (*Boston Globe*, “Proposed immigration raids delayed; Napolitano seeks more scrutiny on investigations,” March 30, 2009).
- ▶ A *San Francisco Chronicle* piece about the findings of the United Food and Commercial Workers union’s commission to investigate raids on meat-packing plants: “I was totally shocked by the level of abuse,’ said UC Davis law Professor Bill Ong Hing, a member of the commission which heard testimony at five hearings across the country. ‘ICE showed up with weapons drawn and no warrants. ... We saw deprivation of prescription drugs, separation of newborns from nursing mothers.’” (*San Francisco Chronicle*, “Panel slams feds’ raid tactics,” June 19, 2009).

## “E-Raids”

We found a few articles about the Obama administration’s push to hold employers accountable for hiring undocumented workers through programs like E-Verify, “an online program that uses federal databases”:

- ▶ A *Los Angeles Times* business section article about Homeland Security Secretary Napolitano’s decision to get rid of the “no-match” rule<sup>2</sup> (on hold since October 2007 when a federal judge ruled that the policy caused irreparable harm to innocent workers) and to replace it with E-Verify audits of 650 businesses nationwide. A Homeland Security spokesperson is quoted as saying, “The idea is to make sure that we are providing employers with a system of employee verification that is accurate, respects the laws of privacy and is truly a good and strong model to maintain a legal workforce.” An ACLU attorney is quoted as saying the decision to abandon the no-match rule was “a victory for all American workers” but voiced concerns about the E-Verify requirement by saying, “Rather than punishing American workers for errors in the government’s own databases, the administration should enforce the workplace rights of all workers.” (*Los Angeles Times*, “U.S. ordering contractors to use E-Verify,” July 9, 2009).
- ▶ A *New York Times* article about the same development in which the reporter observes: “The move to expand the use of E-Verify reflects the Obama administration’s strategy of keeping up the pace of immigration enforcement while weighing whether to push for an overhaul this year that would give legal status to millions of illegal workers, officials said.” Marielena Hincapie, executive director of the National Immigration Law Center, is quoted as saying, “It’s the wrong move at the wrong time.” “While welcoming the cancellation of that rule [the no-match rule] Ms. Hincapie said errors in the E-Verify system could lead to legal workers, including citizens, being fired in the midst of a recession.” (*The New York Times*, “Government to Require Verification of Workers,” July 9, 2009).

## Detention/Deportation

This batch of articles describes both individual cases and systemic problems with the country’s deportation and detention policies and practices:

- ▶ A *Los Angeles Times* piece by columnist Hector Tobar covered the deportation case of Juan Obed Silva, a rehabilitated gang member who came to the United States from Mexico as a baby. A 1998 criminal conviction “caught up with him, and he found himself facing a deportation order to Mexico.” Now 30 years old, Silva had earned a masters degree in English literature and broad support even from Al Rantel, a “conservative KABC talk radio host,” who told his listeners: “Maybe I’m getting soft in my old age. But since he’s remade his life and become a scholar...I’d be inclined to let him stay.” (*Los Angeles Times*, “Paths to a dream converge in court,” February 17, 2009).
- ▶ A two-part investigative report in *The New York Times* about “the secrecy and lack of legal accountability” that characterize “the rapidly growing patchwork of more than 500 county jails, profit-making prisons and federal detention centers where half a million noncitizens were held during the last year while the government tries to deport them.” The report by Nina Bernstein focused on the 2005 detention death of Ahmad Tanveer, a Pakistani New Yorker. The first part traced frustrating efforts to verify Tanveer’s death in a New Jersey county jail: “Even now, most questions about Mr. Tanveer are unanswered, including just who he was and why he had been detained. The rescue of his death from oblivion took a rare mix of chance, vigilance by a few citizen activists, litigation by the civil liberties union and several months of inquiry by *The Times*. Even as the newspaper confirmed Mr. Tanveer’s death with jail officials, and tracked his body’s path from a Freehold morgue to the cargo hold of an airplane at Kennedy airport, immigration authorities maintained that they could find no documents showing such a person was ever detained, or died in their custody.” (“Immigrant Detainee Dies, And a Life Is Buried, Too,” April 3, 2009). The

---

2. The no-match rule is a Bush-era rule adopted by the Department of Homeland Security that requires employers to check their employees’ social security numbers against a federal database to identify (and fire) undocumented workers.

second part filled in some details of Ahmad Tanveer's life in largely sympathetic terms (e.g., he was a "longtime New York City cabdriver who had paid thousands of dollars in taxes and immigration application fees" who "had a very big heart" and loved his adopted country). (*The New York Times*, "Piecing Together a Life that U.S. Immigration Refused to See," July 6, 2009).

- ▶ A *San Francisco Chronicle* article covering the release of a report by Amnesty International, "Jailed without Justice," about the deplorable conditions of detention and lack of due process experienced by immigrant detainees: "It's the second major human rights report in a week to indict the nation's immigration detention system. The system is attracting increased attention in part because the number of people in detention has grown exponentially in recent years and in part because of dozens of in-custody deaths and a lawsuit over the treatment of children." (*San Francisco Chronicle*, "Detained immigrants often face harsh, unfair treatment in U.S. hands, study says," March 25, 2009).
- ▶ An op-ed in the *Atlanta Journal-Constitution* written by the ACLU of Georgia's Immigrants' Rights Project director about the deaths of detainees in private prisons operated by the Corrections Corporation of America and the government's failure to investigate. (*Atlanta Journal-Constitution*, "Private prisons for immigrants lack accountability, oversight," June 11, 2009).
- ▶ A *New York Times* editorial criticizing the Department of Homeland Security's failure to establish legally enforceable standards for the immigration detention system, "a fast-growing network of federal centers, county jails and private prisons that has been plagued by medical neglect and abuse." The editorial calls on the Obama administration to "fix the corrupted detention system." (*The New York Times*, "Justice Ignored," July 6, 2009).

### **Obama Administration's Approach to Enforcement**

- ▶ The new administration's focus on businesses and executives rather than "ordinary workers" was the subject of several articles. In one *Boston Globe* piece, Homeland Security Secretary Napolitano's decision to "delay a series of proposed immigration raids and other enforcement actions at US workplaces" was described as "a change in policy." ("Proposed immigration raids delayed," March 30, 2009). A reporter for the *Los Angeles Times* writes: "The White House has already scaled back the Bush administration's controversial practice of work-site raids. Homeland Security Secretary Janet Napolitano has vowed to shift the emphasis to employers who hire illegal workers." (*Boston Globe*, "'E-raid' leaves workers jobless," June 12, 2009).
- ▶ Napolitano's decision to suspend (but not to abolish) the Bush policy of deporting immigrants whose applications for permanent residency were denied because their American spouses died during the application process was the subject of a *New York Times* article. (*The New York Times*, "Widowed Spouses Are Given Reprieve on Deportation Rule," June 10, 2009).
- ▶ A substantive article about the Obama administration's approach to immigration appeared in *The Washington Post* on May 20, 2009. Entitled, "Little New in Obama's Immigration Policy; While Embracing Bush's Programs, President Says Nuance Makes the Difference," the article emphasizes the degree to which Bush administration initiatives continue to be enforced by the new administration: "Homeland Security Secretary Janet Napolitano has announced only one formal change from Bush administration policy: limited controversial raids at workplaces." The reporter uses a quote from the April 29<sup>th</sup> news conference during which Obama defended aggressive border enforcement: "If the American people don't feel like you can secure the borders, then it's hard to strike a deal that would get people out of the shadows and on a pathway to citizenship who are already here. The attitude of the average American is going to be, well, you're just going to have hundreds of thousands more coming in each year." (*The Washington Post*, "Little New in Obama's Immigration Policy," May 20, 2009).

## Immigration And The Economy (7)

The scan turned up just a few pieces that directly confronted the relationship between immigration reform and the economic crisis. Two opinion pieces appeared in *The New York Times*.

- ▶ An editorial, “Immigration Reform and Hard Times,” in which the editors congratulated the Obama administration and the labor movement for joining forces to push for immigration reform this year: “Even in a bad economy—especially in a bad economy—getting undocumented immigrants on the right side of the law only makes sense.” The editorial argued that Congress’s failure to reform immigration is one of the root causes of the current crisis: “American workers and businesses continue to be undercut by the underground economy. The economic potential of some of the country’s most industrious workers is thwarted.... The ingredients of reform are clear: legalization for the 12 million...” (*The New York Times*, “Immigration Reform and Hard Times,” April 14, 2009).
- ▶ An op-ed by Jennifer Gordon, a professor of labor and immigration law at Fordham Law School, in which she echoes the same argument: “The need for immigration reform is more urgent than ever. The current system hurts wages and working conditions—for everyone.” She concludes, “The United States needs an open and fair system, not a holding pen. The best way forward is to create an immigration system with protection for all workers at its core.” (*The New York Times*, “Workers Without Borders,” March 10, 2009).

A few articles focused on the effects of a worsening economy on immigrant workers:

- ▶ A *Washington Post* piece about the denial of H-1B temporary working visas to skilled foreign professionals: “As the U.S. economy slows, highly skilled foreign professionals seeking work under various visa programs are finding it harder to get jobs.” (*The Washington Post*, “U.S. Visa Limits Hit Indian Workers,” April 6, 2009).
- ▶ A *Los Angeles Times* piece about a Brookings Institution study showing the slowing of Latino and Asian growth in the Inland Empire, California, and other outlying areas and the return of immigrant families to urban centers: “Analysts said the recession was probably the major reason for the decline in growth rates of Latino and Asian populations and the rates’ increase in major urban areas.... Since the housing bust began in 2005, homeownership rates have fallen more sharply for Latinos and blacks than the population overall.... [W]hen immigrants lose their homes or jobs in outlying areas, they may be moving back to traditional gateway cities that offer bigger social networks, family support and immigrant services.” (*Los Angeles Times*, “California; Latino growth shifts back to hubs,” May 16, 2009).

## Policy Reform (6)

The issue of immigration policy reform was more or less dormant until June 2009 when President Obama announced at a June 19<sup>th</sup> Latino prayer breakfast that he intended to hold a “working session on immigration reform” with lawmakers the following week and to “pass some sort of immigration plan” during his presidency that “should clarify the status of millions who are here illegally, many who have put down roots.... For those who wish to become citizens, we should require them to pay a penalty and pay taxes, learn English, go to the back of the line behind those who played by the rules.” (*Los Angeles Times*, “Citizenship path may be delayed; Before a White House meeting next week on immigration reform, the urgency of the issue is downplayed,” June 20, 2009).

Coverage of the ensuing working session led with the “thorniness” of the issue, the difficulty of achieving political consensus, and the unlikelihood of passage this year:

- ▶ The *San Francisco Chronicle* report, “Obama takes up thorny issue with lawmakers; Immigration,” began with “President Obama plans to sit down today with congressional leaders for the first serious discussion about the thorny issue of immigration policy since he became chief executive.... Many analysts are skeptical that Congress will vote on an immigration bill this year...” (June 25, 2009).
- ▶ *The New York Times* article, “Obama Set for First, Tentative Step Today on Immigration Overhaul,” began with “President Obama is expected to meet with Congressional leaders of both parties on Thursday to begin laying the political groundwork for sweeping immigration legislation, even though its passage this year is considered very unlikely.” (June 25, 2009).
- ▶ *The Boston Globe* carried a brief Associated Press story, “Obama tells lawmakers immigration a priority.” Written the day after the working session, it led with “Launching a fresh effort toward a sweeping US immigration overhaul, President Obama said yesterday that a bipartisan bill on the sensitive and volatile political issue will be difficult but must get underway this year.” (June 26, 2009).

None of the articles went into any detail about what the “sweeping overhaul” might consist of, and unnamed Obama aides are quoted as saying the president “hopes this initial conversation will lead to a more substantive debate later in the year.” (San Francisco Chronicle, June 25, 2009).

### Anti-Immigrant Rules (6)

These articles report on state and local laws targeting immigrants, and much of the focus is on the controversy generated by various state and local legislative proposals:

- ▶ A Los Angeles voter initiative, Jamiel’s Law, to allow police to arrest “illegal-immigrant gang members” solely for being in the country illegally, failed to gather enough voter signatures to qualify for the May ballot. (*Los Angeles Times*, “‘Jamiel’s Law’ misses the ballot,” December 12, 2008).
- ▶ A proposal by the Montgomery County, Maryland, police that they be allowed to ask suspects arrested for violent crimes and weapons offenses about their immigration status. The beginning of the article focused on the controversy surrounding the proposal, citing the opposition of Del. Ana Sol Guitierrez’s (D-Montgomery) “and other immigrant advocates” because it could lead to racial profiling, and resistance “from the opposite perspective,” because the proposal didn’t go far enough. (*The Washington Post*, “Montgomery Police Seek Tougher Line on Immigrant Status,” January 1, 2009).
- ▶ A bill pending in the Georgia General Assembly designed to prevent federal stimulus funds from going to undocumented workers. The article emphasized the controversy surrounding the bill. (*Atlanta Journal-Constitution*, “Georgia nears tougher line on illegal workers,” March 29, 2009).
- ▶ Police opposition to the Massachusetts prohibition against granting drivers’ licenses to undocumented immigrants. (*Boston Globe*, “Widen right to drive, say chiefs; Some make a case for issuing licenses to undocumented,” April 20, 2009).
- ▶ The Massachusetts requirement that undocumented immigrant students pay nonresident college tuition fees. (*Boston Globe*, “From In-Crown to Out; Illegal immigrants often find the road to college blocked,” May 17, 2009).

### Immigrants And Crime (5)

The scan produced two *Washington Post* stories about criminal cases in which the perpetrator's immigration status was mentioned at the beginning of the article. Both crimes involved fatal shootings in Maryland ("Man, 20, Charged In Bus Shooting," November 9, 2008; "Suspect in Silver Spring Slaying Is Charged With Murder," January 15, 2009). A third *Washington Post* article reported on a Justice Department policy adopted in the waning days of the Bush administration to collect DNA samples from all noncitizens detained by authorities. The story's lead reads: "Immigration and civil liberties groups condemned a new U.S. government policy..." and lawyers from the ACLU and the American Immigration Lawyers Association are quoted. (*The Washington Post*, "New Rule Expands DNA Collection to All People Arrested," December 12, 2008).

### Immigrant Integration (5)

This batch of articles reported on programs, policies, and practices that aim to integrate immigrants into American society. They included:

- ▶ An article reporting on a day-long health fair to be held in the town of Quincy, Massachusetts, "to help medically underserved residents in this diverse area." The article notes that translators who speak Vietnamese, Portuguese, Arabic, and Chinese will be on hand and quotes one of the organizers: "It's important that undocumented immigrants, regardless of questions over their status, receive medical services." (*Boston Globe*, "Group reaches out to ease quiet suffering in Quincy," November 13, 2008).
- ▶ A story about the swearing-in ceremony for Felipe Aguirre, a leader of the Maywood, California, sanctuary movement, who won a seat on the city council. (*Los Angeles Times*, "Foreign by birth, American by ritual," January 20, 2009).
- ▶ A story about the pilot project launched by the U.S. Army to recruit noncitizens who are here on temporary visas or who have been granted asylum. (*Los Angeles Times*, "Army widens immigrant recruiting; Program aims to add much-needed language and health specialists with an expanded offer of U.S. citizenship," May 4, 2009).

### Mixed-Status Families (3)

This issue received more press attention than in the past. *The Washington Post* reported on the Pew Hispanic Center's report that found that "the illegal immigration population is mostly made up of young families that are having children at a much faster rate than previously known." The 900-word article reported that "Immigrant advocates and members of Congress, hoping to build momentum for legislation legalizing unauthorized immigrants, have been highlighting the plight of their U.S.-born children in a series of public events across the country in recent months. But the issue also could heighten anxieties in many communities that the U.S.-born children of illegal immigrants will increase demands on schools and social services." (*The Washington Post*, "Illegal Immigrants' Legal Kids Snarl Policy; Increased Birthrate Exacerbates Issue," April 15, 2009).

A week later, *The New York Times* ran a 3,150-word feature by David Gonzalez focusing on the plight of an Ecuadorean mixed-status family living in New York City. In "A Family Divided By 2 Words, Legal and Illegal," accompanied by photos of the family members, the reporter writes: "These four—who let a reporter and a photographer trail them only if they were not identified, for fear of being deported—are part of a growing group of what are often called mixed-status families. Nearly 2.3 million undocumented families, about three-quarters of those who are here illegally, have at least one child who is a U.S. citizen, according to the Pew Hispanic Center.... In fact, most immigrants live in families with a blend of legal statuses, opportunities and dreams. To spend time with this Queens family is to see, up close, how the growing disparities within immigrant homes are pulling their members in opposite directions and complicating efforts to plan a common future." (*The New York Times*, "A Family Divided By 2 Words, Legal and Illegal," April 26, 2009).

### Hate Crimes (3)

The articles about the funeral for Marcelo Lucero, an Ecuadorean immigrant who was stabbed to death in Suffolk County, New York. “In Mourning an Immigrant, a Call for Unity on Long Island” reported the presence at the funeral of 500 people, including the mayor of Patchogue, where the crime occurred, and several Latino political leaders. The pastor presiding over the funeral was quoted as follows, “Perhaps what Marcelo accomplished in death is far greater than he might have been able to do in his life. What he has done for this community since his spirit left this earth is that he can possibly be the source of healing, hope and reconciliation for a town that can reform itself.” (*The New York Times*, “In Mourning an Immigrant, a Call for Unity on Long Island,” November 16, 2008).

An editorial in *The Philadelphia Inquirer* strongly criticized an all-white jury’s verdict in a hate crime case. Luis Ramirez, “an illegal immigrant from Mexico was kicked to death in a fight with teens last summer...” The Schuylkill County jury convicted two of the teens of simple assault, carrying a maximum penalty of two years in jail. The editorial urged federal authorities to “step up their efforts to bring Ramirez’s killer or killers to justice. The trial verdict has sent the message that the community is willing to look the other way when an immigrant is killed in front of multiple witnesses in the middle of town.” (*The Philadelphia Inquirer*, “Bring killers to justice,” May 31, 2009).

## B. ANALYSIS: THE DOMINANT MEDIA FRAME

The dominant media frame—how the media is currently telling the immigration story—is formed by two themes. First, the American immigration system is still broken, and its continuing enforcement is producing consequences that undermine American values of fairness, family, and community; second, solutions are elusive.

### The System—Still Broken (and “Un-American”)

Close to half of all the articles in the scan are about federal enforcement issues, and most of them report on serious flaws in policies and their execution. Add to these the half-dozen stories about failed state and local efforts to control immigration and several feature stories about the suffering of “mixed-status families,” and the takeaway for the reader is that the system is more dysfunctional than ever, and the unintended consequences of these failed enforcement efforts are in conflict with basic American values. Specific findings include:

- ▶ **The action has shifted from the border to the workplace and the family.** The “immigrant problem” frame that we identified in our 2004–2006 media scan—the “tidal wave” of “illegals” crossing our borders—is no longer dominant. The Minutemen and other vigilante groups that attracted so much coverage in that period have all but disappeared from the media picture. Instead, enforcement is targeting people who have jobs, families, and roots in the community.
- ▶ **The severe negative consequences of federal immigration enforcement have become more newsworthy in the past year.** This scan picked up numerous stories about detainees dying for lack of medical attention, raids tearing mothers away from their infants, American children in “mixed-status” families being forcibly separated from their parents, businesses that rely on unskilled workers going bankrupt, and whole communities facing economic ruin as a result. As a resident of Postville, Iowa, the scene of one of the largest immigration raids in U.S. history, said, “This town would be in a world of hurt if that plant closed.”
- ▶ **Coverage of the Obama administration’s immigration policy:** Stories and editorial pieces about the new administration’s actions toward immigration convey the idea that although there have been some changes in enforcement practices they have been at the margins and conclude that the fundamental problems remain.

- ▶ **The relationship between the economic crisis and immigration has not received as much press attention as one might have expected.** To the extent that it has, there are as many stories in our sample about the negative impact of the economy on immigrants, both high and low skilled, as there are about any negative impact of immigrants on the economy.
- ▶ **Immigrant voices are more audible than in the past.** Immigrants were quoted in about a dozen articles, and their quotes eloquently reinforce the idea that the current system is broken and that immigrants are “part of America.” Examples include:

“Ivan Torres, a 9-year-old boy from San Jose, said he lives in fear that his father, who earns a living cleaning offices, will be taken away: ‘If my father is deported, who will pay the bills? Who will take care of me and my two sisters? We need to keep families together.’” (*San Francisco Chronicle*, “Pelosi wants end to raids that divide immigrant families,” March 8, 2009).

“‘I miss my country,’ she said in English. ‘But I love this country. This is mine now.’ She has raised two daughters, both legal residents, she said.... ‘I am here to give a better life to my daughters, to immigrant children. I want to give them hope and opportunities.’” (*The Washington Post*, “I Am Here to Give a Better Life...to Immigrant Children,” January 17, 2009).

“Many of the lingering mourners gathered around the mayor of Patchogue, Paul V. Pontieri, Jr., as he asked people to give him the chance to work toward easing racial and ethnic tensions. Marco Balbuca, 38, who is from Gualaceo, Ecuador, Mr. Lucero’s hometown, told Mr. Pontieri: ‘We just want a good life. We want a future here.’” (*The New York Times*, “In Mourning an Immigrant, a Call for Unity on Long Island,” November 16, 2008).

“Felipe [20-year-old Dream Act activist] has spent the past nine years transforming himself into an American, though not on paper.... ‘I get sick of people saying you don’t want to become Americans,’ he said. ‘I decided to do my part to show that immigrants aren’t some species of aliens; that we can be just like them.’” (*Boston Globe*, “From In-Crowd to Out; Illegal immigrants often find the road to college blocked,” May 17, 2009).

“‘I feel like I belong in this country,’ he [Amadou Ly, Senegalese immigrant who became front-page news in 2006 when he couldn’t travel to the national robotics finals in Atlanta because he didn’t have ID] said, recalling how he longed to vote in the presidential election. ‘As soon as I have the next opportunity to become a citizen, I will take it.’” (*The New York Times*, “Facing Graduation, Not Deportation,” February 16, 2009).

## Solutions Are Elusive

Almost entirely absent from the articles in this scan is any serious discussion of solutions. The terms “overhaul” and “sweeping reform” appear regularly but without any detail or definition. To the extent that news articles touch on reform, they talk about the Obama administration’s deliberate *avoidance* of any specificity. Rather, the emphasis is on how controversial or “thorny” the issue is and how unlikely passage is this year. Peter Wallsten of the *Los Angeles Times* writes:

“And even though Obama used a Latino prayer breakfast Friday morning to reiterate his intention to pass some sort of new immigration plan during his presidency, next week’s gathering [the June 25th working session] demonstrates how the White House and congressional leaders are trying to strike a careful balance. They are seeking to assuage Latino voters, who are a key constituency, while avoiding specific promises on timing and substance, and while trying not to antagonize independent voters who may have a skeptical view of legalization plans.” (*Los Angeles Times*, “Citizenship path may be delayed,” June 20, 2009).

Ginger Thompson and David Herszenhorn of *The New York Times* write:

“President Obama is expected to meet with Congressional leaders of both parties on Thursday to begin laying the political groundwork for sweeping immigration legislation, even though its passage this year is considered very unlikely. With lawmakers already immersed in health care, financial regulation and energy policy, and with the Senate set to hold hearings soon on Judge Sonia Sotomayor’s nomination to the Supreme Court, administration officials and many in Congress say it is improbable that they will be able to add anything as challenging as an immigration overhaul. And the clock is not the only obstacle. While there is a consensus that the immigration system is broken, Republicans and Democrats, politically burned over the issue in the recent past, remain divided even within their own parties about how to fix it.” (*The New York Times*, “Obama Set for First, Tentative Step Today on Immigration Overhaul,” June 25, 2009).

Advocates do not appear as active participants in the policy reform discourse thus far. Our scan did not pick up any opinion pieces by immigrants’ rights advocates about what comprehensive reform would look. Only one article quotes nongovernmental sources<sup>3</sup> and most of the space in that article is given to academics and analysts.<sup>4</sup>

# Progressive Media

To gain some understanding of the story progressives are seeing and hearing (beyond what they are reading in the mainstream press) we looked at a combination of liberal print and broadcast media. Overall, the immigration issue has not been a focus of progressive media outlets since the Obama election. Liberal TV hosts in particular have not been carrying forward a reform message. There have, however, been occasional articles and programs whose content merit mention.

## Print<sup>5</sup>

Coverage of the immigration issue by the three progressive magazines that were scanned was very limited during the time period covered and did not include any in-depth articles on immigration policy. Specifically, *The American Prospect* and *The Nation*, published commentary that attempted to contextualize the policy debate. *The New Republic* had a feature story about the demise of the Minutemen movement.

- ▶ *The American Prospect*: Ann Friedman, the associate editor of the magazine’s website, published a comment in the May 2009 issue titled “A Give and Take on Immigration.” Her focus in this 764-word piece is the extent to which immigrants have breathed new life into small town America. She describes Milan, Missouri, “where around 50 percent of the 2,000 or so residents were recent Latino immigrants who had come for jobs at the town’s pork-processing plant.... [P]rior to the pork plant opening and the immigrant influx, the tiny burg had been all but dead.... [A]t

---

3. Government sources quoted in stories about the working session are Rep. Jason Altmire (D-PA); Rep. Luis V. Gutierrez (D-IL); Rep. Brian Bilbray (R-CA); Rep. Zoe Lofgren (D-CA); David Axelrod; Rep. Heath Shuler (D-NC); Sen. Charles Schumer (D-NY); Robert Menendez (D-NJ); and John T. Morton, assistant secretary of homeland security.

4. A June 25, 2009 *San Francisco Chronicle* article quotes Prof. Noah Pickus of Duke University, Prof. Michael J. White of Brown University, Marc Rosenblum of the Migration Policy Institute, and Jessica Vaughan of the Center for Immigration Studies.

5. We looked only at the print magazines and not at their websites or blogs.

the time of my visit it was undeniable that Milan was more alive and more vibrant because of its new residents.” Friedman argues that the experiences of towns like Milan and Postville, Iowa, give lie to the “dominant anti-immigrant narrative...that immigrants *take*” but don’t give and concludes with the following:

“It’s easy to acknowledge in big, sweeping terms that our economy depends on immigrant labor. But we rarely hear the stories of small towns suffering in the absence of immigrants.... As we push Congress to enact comprehensive immigration reform, we must think of this issue holistically. When it comes to immigration, everyone who lives in America—immigrant or not—has something both to gain and to lose, to give and to take.”

- ▶ *The Nation*: The May 18<sup>th</sup> issue carried a comment by Bill Ong Hing and David Bacon entitled “Rights, Not Raids.” The authors urge that “we need a reality check” when it comes to the effectiveness of policies that try to discourage immigrants from coming here in search of work. Employer sanctions, workplace raids, and programs like E-Verify—all aimed at discouraging workers by arresting them or trying to prevent them from finding work—are “doomed to fail. To reduce the pressure that causes undocumented migration, we need to change our trade and economic policies so they don’t produce poverty in countries like Mexico.”
- ▶ *The New Republic*: Deputy Web Editor Zvika Krieger published a feature story in the November 19, 2008 issue about a visit with Jim Gilchrist, founder of the Minuteman Project. “Time’s Up” focuses on the decline of the Minuteman movement once its “golden period of influence” and “15 minutes of fame” ended after the 2007 debate was over. Krieger writes:

“There is no doubt that the Minutemen—aided by sympathizers in the media like Lou Dobbs—drove the national conversation in 2005. But whether the enormous wellspring of American anger over illegal immigration that they claim to have tapped into actually existed is another question.... This year, there has been more evidence that, while immigration remains a legitimate issue, the supposed nationwide furor was a product of media hype.... [M]ost Americans are professing moderate views on the issue.”

## Broadcast

Progressive broadcast media also devoted relatively little time to the immigration policy debate, and when they did, they tended to avoid taking clear positions.

- ▶ *Hardball*, MSNBC: On April 9<sup>th</sup> Chris Matthews moderated a debate between Rep. Darrell Issa (R-CA) and Rep. Gabrielle Giffords (D-AZ) on immigration reform. Matthews was uncharacteristically quiet, allowing each side to put forward his or her argument without interruption. Rep. Issa stated his position as follows: “He [President Obama] gets to see if he can strike the right balance, one that does real enforcement, one that has opportunities for guest workers, but quite frankly, one that does not give a pathway to citizenship as a reward for being already here illegally.” Rep. Giffords followed with: “No one’s talking about amnesty. Amnesty is what President Ronald Reagan granted back in the 1980s, and we’re talking about a realistic plan to deal with the millions of people who are here, bringing people out of the shadows, making sure that there’s some form of documentation for those folks.” Rep. Giffords continued the debate without elaborating on what the steps of a realistic plan might be.
- ▶ *The Ed Show*, MSNBC: On April 9<sup>th</sup> Tom Tancredo was Ed Schultz’s only guest during a brief segment on immigration. Schultz introduced the segment with: “There are 12 million illegal immigrants living in the U.S. Now President Obama is going to take a stab at immigration reform. This issue is a lightning rod for conservatives, and it could put the president at odds with centrist Democrats and some union workers. Can he get a reform deal done?” Tancredo made two major points: (1) that he would be framing the immigration issue in the context of the rising unemployment rate: “Believe me, when you tie immigration to the economy, which in fact we can do, and we will do during the debate on this issue, it rises right to the top [of public concern] pretty quickly”; and (2) that the only solution is to secure the border by constructing a fence and putting the military at the border. Schultz did not challenge Tancredo.

- ▶ *Democracy Now!*: Host Amy Goodman focused on immigration during three shows this spring on March 25, April 27, and May 5. Each show focused on a specific problem—Amnesty International’s report on the detention system, deaths in the Sonora Desert, and family separation—and featured guests from the immigrants’ rights movement.<sup>6</sup> Comprehensive reform was not addressed on any of these shows. Rather, both the host and the guests stuck to the narrower issues mentioned earlier.

## African American Media

None of the African American publications that we reviewed—*Ebony*, *Jet*, and *Black Enterprise*—published any articles about the immigration issue during this time period.

Tavis Smiley devoted time on his April 23<sup>rd</sup> broadcast on PBS to the issue of immigrants serving in the U.S. military. In a sympathetic 9½-minute segment, he interviewed Sgt. Juan Luis Alcivar, who became a citizen 4 years after joining the Army. Smiley opened with the following: “Sergeant Juan Luis Alcivar joined the U.S. Army back in 2005 despite the fact that the Dominican-born New Yorker was not a U.S. citizen. In 2007 he was shot and wounded in Iraq and awarded the Purple Heart. On April 10<sup>th</sup>, at a ceremony in Washington, he was sworn in as a U.S. citizen by Homeland [Security] Secretary Janet Napolitano. Shortly after that I spoke with Sgt. Alcivar about his inspiring story.” Alcivar went on to describe his background, his decision to join the military, and his injury. Smiley thanked him and closed by saying, “You might be surprised to learn that there are nearly 20,000 foreign-born non-U.S. citizens currently serving in the U.S. military. Many hope to follow in Sgt. Alcivar’s footsteps and eventually become U.S. citizens.”

## The Conservative Narrative

In our first media analysis that looked at coverage between July 2004 and April 2006, we found that anti-immigrant advocates were frequently quoted and were promoting a consistent narrative with two elements: law and order and the overwhelming scarcity of resources. They argued again and again that the uncontrolled flow of “illegal aliens” had reached epidemic and dangerous proportions and the federal government was failing or refusing to enforce our immigration laws against these law breakers to the detriment of our national security. By the time of the 2007 Congressional debate, their message, “no amnesty for lawbreakers,” was dominant and conservative talk show hosts were able to whip up the anti-immigrant activism that enabled conservative lawmakers to derail reform.

---

6. Rosa Clemente, Immigrant Rights Campaign Director for AIUSA; Dan Mills, Volunteer for No More Deaths; Isabel Garcia of Derechos Humanos; and Mariano Espinoza, executive director of the Minnesota Immigration Freedom Network.

## Mainstream Press

During the time period covered by this scan, the opposition's narrative has received less coverage in the mainstream press than in the past, and when included, conservatives are delivering a less focused message. Mark Krikorian of the Center for Immigration Studies was quoted more often than any other opponent of immigration reform, but instead of communicating a clear and consistent message, his quotes tended to be sideline oppositional comments about the actions of other actors such as the White House or a state legislature. (It is worth noting that we made a similar observation about the role of pro-immigrant advocates during the 2007 Senate debate when we wrote that "By and large, the advocates played the role of a Greek chorus. Most of their quotes were sideline comments about the 'main action' in the Senate."):

- ▶ "Mark Krikorian, executive director of the Center for Immigration Studies, which seeks to reduce immigration, said Obama aids are trying to manage the issue until an economic turnaround permits an attempt to overhaul immigration laws. 'I think their calculus is, how do they keep Hispanic groups happy enough without angering the broader public so much that they sabotage health care and their other priorities.'" (*Boston Globe*, "Proposed immigration raids delayed," March 30, 2009).
- ▶ "'The case [of President Obama's aunt] is unusual in American history because it's a relative of the president involved in immigration matters,' said Mark Krikorian.... 'It really does present the White House with an opportunity or a minefield. If they follow through on a decision that she should go home, that would actually raise the president's credibility enormously on immigration enforcement.'" (*Boston Globe*, "Back in Boston, Obama's aunt fighting deportation," March 24, 2009).
- ▶ "'The fault here lies with the parents,' said Mark Krikorian... 'I have a real moral problem with these parents claiming that we have a responsibility to fix their mistakes.'" (*Boston Globe*, "From In-Crowd to Out; Illegal immigrants often find road to college blocked," May 17, 2009).
- ▶ "'By aggressively recruiting foreigners abroad, or illegal immigrants who could use such a program to get legalized, we could easily create a situation where the Pentagon comes to rely on cheap foreign labor,' said Mark Krikorian..." (*Los Angeles Times*, "Army widens immigrant recruiting," May 4, 2009).

We found only one published op-ed by a conservative: "Amnesty makes no sense," by Lamar Smith (R-Texas) in *USA Today*. Appearing several days after the working session, it provides insight into what the opposition's message may be when the reform debate takes off. The Congressman links the issue to the economic crisis: "Unemployment hit 15.5% last month for American workers without high school diplomas. It makes no sense to give amnesty or a 'path to citizenship' to millions of illegal immigrants who would compete with unemployed Americans for scarce jobs and drive down their wages." His policy solution is "a strategy of 'attrition through enforcement,'" which "would dramatically reduce the number of illegal immigrants over time."

## Broadcast

The three conservative talk show hosts we reviewed—Lou Dobbs, Glenn Beck, and Rush Limbaugh—did not spend much time on immigration during this period; their primary focus was criticizing the Obama administration on economic and fiscal issues. This was true even of Dobbs, despite his long-standing interest in immigration issues. The only time that these conservative talk shows focused on immigration was when news broke in early March that President Obama planned to take up the issue. Their coverage emphasized the opposition's familiar message that "reform" and "amnesty" are synonymous or attempted to connect immigrants to the worsening economy.

- ▶ *Lou Dobbs Tonight* (CNN): Dobbs spent most of his April 9th broadcast criticizing the Obama administration, immigration reform, and the immigrant rights movement, which he disparagingly referred to as “ethnocentric special interest groups” and “the pro-amnesty open borders movement.” He began the show with: “Here we go again. The Obama administration making amnesty for illegal aliens and open borders one of its top priorities, the Obama administration has decided to bring in more foreign workers, even as many U.S. citizens are struggling to find jobs. Also illegal aliens already in this country costing citizens billions of dollars in higher costs for health care, education, and the result of depressed wages.... [T]he Obama administration seems determined to flood the U.S. job market with even more cheap labor.” His first guest was Kris Kobach, identified as “an immigration attorney who opposes comprehensive immigration reform,” who said: “If they try to grant them amnesty now, when so many Americans are struggling to get a job and put food on the table, it’s going to be mayhem.” The second part of the show was a debate between Ali Noorani (National Immigration Forum) and Robert Rector (The Heritage Foundation). Again, the emphasis was on the link between immigration and the economy, with both Rector and Dobbs deriding Noorani’s argument that “To fix the immigration system gets us so much further down the path of fixing the economy.”
- ▶ *The Glenn Beck Program*: In an April 10<sup>th</sup> critique of President Obama, Beck said, “President Obama now also wants to legalize illegal aliens, at a time when the unemployment rate is 8.5 percent and the underemployment rate is 15.6 percent. It’s hard enough for Americans to find a job, without being forced to compete with a whole new crop of workers.”
- ▶ *The Rush Limbaugh Show*: During his April 10th broadcast, Limbaugh stated that “Amnesty is designed to expand the Democratic Party and kill the Republican Party.... The Democratic Party way is to destroy the U.S. culture in order to get votes.”

## Findings

Based on our analysis of the public discourse, the stage appears to be set for a serious, values-based, solution-oriented conversation about comprehensive immigration reform, in which the core narrative will find a receptive audience in the public at large and among specific key audiences. The confluence of several factors has created this opening:

1. **The conservative narrative is no longer dominant**, nor is a consistent and coordinated message being delivered through the mainstream media. The conservative effort to equate “comprehensive reform” with “amnesty” and to play on the fear that immigrants are taking jobs away from citizens during an economic recession does not seem to be finding traction with the public. Support for legalization—with conditions—has measurably increased in the past two years, and a growing majority says that, in this economy, it would rather see undocumented immigrants converted into taxpayers than see them deported.
2. Although the issue is labeled “thorny” by the media, **the public discourse is less toxic than it was in 2007**. Frequent coverage of the abuses of federal enforcement efforts and the more frequent inclusion of the voices of immigrants expressing their commitment to this country and its values (i.e., “I love this country”; “I feel like I belong to this country”) generate sympathy, soften public opposition, and reinforce the idea that “we need workable solutions that uphold our nation’s values that move us forward together.” Just as the public became deeply troubled by the

issue of the torture of terrorism suspects after seeing and hearing graphic news reports about Guantanamo, Abu Ghraib, and water boarding, they may increasingly be troubled by reports of the mistreatment of immigrants and their families.

3. We know that in the current climate, concern about the economy and jobs eclipses other concerns, including immigration. A New York Times/CBS poll in late-April showed that 42 percent of the public named “the economy” as the “most important problem facing the country today” as compared to only three percent who named immigration. Nevertheless, **recent polls also show that there is broad support for, and a sense of urgency about, the passage of immigration reform.** The Benenson Strategy Group posed the following question in its May 2009 survey:

Which is closer to your view of Congress: (a) With the economy and health care reform already on Congress’ plate for this year, they should wait and tackle immigration reform later; (b) Congress can handle multiple issues at the same time. They should tackle immigration reform this year.

Option (b) was favored by a 59 percent majority. The public wants action and wants it soon. As recent focus groups show, key persuadable audiences are looking for “common sense solutions” rather than posturing and rhetoric.

# Recommendations

## Mainstream media

The mainstream media are not yet projecting a vision of what a values-based, solution-oriented immigration policy would look like, yet the public is hungry for details. The good news is that advocates have the opportunity to fill the void by projecting a blueprint for reform. The danger is that the anti-immigrants spokespeople will do it first. This is a time for advocates to approach media methodologically. Americans must be inoculated against the anti-immigrant rhetoric that comprehensive reform equals “amnesty.” The pro-immigrant core narrative does that by including specific conditions that immigrants would have to meet to “register” and become citizens. The public needs to understand how our broken immigration system is detrimental to the nation’s economy and how comprehensive reform will benefit American society as a whole.

**Recommendation: Tap into one of the media’s current narratives about immigration**—that the system is still broken and its continuing enforcement is producing consequences that undermine American values of fairness, family, and community. Advocates can do this by continuing to pitch stories that have already proved to be newsworthy, such as stories that:

- ▶ Expose the unfairness and extreme hardship imposed by specific federal enforcement efforts;
- ▶ Show *how* the current legal framework is broken. Opinion research shows that Americans are motivated to support reform when presented with certain facts, among them the impossibility of ever “becoming legal” under current law. Many of these relatively informed voters thought that undocumented immigrants could simply go to a government office and “get legal.” The fact that even children who were brought here by their parents at a very young age have no way to remedy the situation later in life evoked sympathy and the desire for a solution.

- ▶ Combine a critique of the current system with concrete policy recommendations that will address its chief problems. The pro-immigrant core narrative and other arguments for reform are most effective when accompanied by specific, workable solutions.
- ▶ Show the futility of the “attrition through enforcement” argument. Again, focus group participants were surprised and moved when they were informed that it would take at least 34 years to deport all undocumented immigrants. The public wants realistic solutions, and “attrition through enforcement” is demonstrably not one of them. But N.B.: In showing the unworkable nature of this approach, it should be renamed rather than reinforced.
- ▶ Give immigrants a voice. Immigrants can be their own best advocates, and reporters appear to be seeking them out for both narrative content and commentary; despite that fact, immigrants were not quoted in any of the six articles in our scan focusing on policy reform. Continue to steer reporters and producers to eloquent immigrants who can make the core narrative “real” and whose stories are connected to the need for systemic reform. It is critical that the correlation between individual stories and the broken system is clearly drawn. Advocates need to frame these stories to focus on the system and its failures, as opposed to the individual. The systemic frame can motivate target audiences to see policy changes, rather than individual behavior, as the solution to the immigration problem.

**Recommendation: Demonstrate how comprehensive immigration reform will help the U.S. economy.**

- ▶ Continue to find and pitch stories about small towns and cities that have been “revitalized” by immigrants.
- ▶ Identify and pitch credible experts who can explain in plain language how the undocumented labor market drives down wages and worsens working conditions for Americans workers in ways that comprehensive reform will correct.
- ▶ Place op-eds by economists who can show persuasively that comprehensive reform will mean more tax dollars and an increase in the consumption of goods and services.

**Recommendation: Exercise discipline; utilize core narrative.** Reframing the media discourse takes coordination and discipline. Accurate facts and logical arguments are necessary but, unfortunately, not sufficient to prevail. An additional ingredient is a common narrative that is rooted in shared values, tested empirically, and communicated again and again by large numbers of proponents. As our last mainstream media analysis demonstrated, opponents of comprehensive immigration reform have had a clear core narrative focusing on law and order and overwhelming of scarce resources. Although the pro-immigrant movement lacked a coherent narrative until recently, it has embraced an effective one in the form of *workable solutions that uphold our nation’s values and move us forward together*. The more frequently and effectively spokespeople can deliver that narrative, the more successful they will be in collectively reframing the media debate.

Based on a series of focus groups with key audiences, Lake Research Partners found that “the most successful messages were those that at some point enumerated the steps of a comprehensive solution” and that the new core narrative “is a successful example of this, emphasizing workable solutions that uphold our values and move us forward together. **This message and its overall style are widely applicable outside of advocacy on behalf of comprehensive immigration reform legislation.**”

Advocates will be called upon to comment on specific proposals, and it is crucial that they resist the temptation to stay within the narrow confines of reporters’ questions but instead use the opportunity to advance the larger message. This rule should apply even in the absence of complete agreement within the movement concerning the specific proposal in question. If a reporter asks what you think

of a senator’s amendment to a particular bill, do not respond, “We think Senator X’s amendment is unnecessary and unconstitutional.” Do respond, “We need workable solutions that uphold our nation’s values and move us forward together, and Senator X’s amendment does not do that because....”

## Progressive Media

Progressive voters share many values—fairness, equality, opportunity—that should make them “natural allies” of the immigrant rights movement. Their engaged support will be critical to a legislative victory. However, the focus groups conducted by The Opportunity Agenda and Lake Research Partners suggest that these voters “do not know very much about the immigration system, its laws, and its specific problems. We see the same common misperceptions in these groups as in others among less attentive swing voters.” The focus groups also revealed that these voters, like the American public in general, share “the widespread perception that immigrants are overloading systems like Medicaid, hospitals and public schools.”

Up to now, however, progressive media have not paid much attention to the issue of comprehensive immigration reform. It is important that these media outlets start immediately to educate their audiences, who rely on them for information, analysis, and commentary. Reform of the immigration system is a progressive issue that affects the same people as other issues that these audiences care about. In particular, progressive talk show hosts like Rachel Maddow, Ed Schultz, and Tavis Smiley should be pointed toward dismantling the conservative arguments in clear terms and providing a reliable platform for pro-immigration policies.

**Recommendation: Reach out to journalists who publish in progressive print media to make our case.** Based on our scan of a sampling of progressive magazines, it does not appear that there have been many serious, in-depth articles about immigration reform in the recent past. Nor has there been much editorial commentary. Every effort should be made to identify receptive journalists and editors and help them shape stories that both carry the core message and lay out in detail the vision of reform.

**Recommendation: Anticipate news hooks and pitch to progressive talk show hosts.** Take advantage of all news hooks—new studies or reports, the release of a new book, anniversaries, developments at the state level that have national implications—to get progressive talk shows to focus on the issue and give advocates a platform to deliver the core narrative and lay out comprehensive solutions. It is also important that advocates define the immigration issue as progressive and that its consequences affect the same people as other progressive issues.

## African American Media

Like progressive voters, African Americans are not a pre-existing base of support for comprehensive immigration reform despite the fact that they share values that are core to the immigrant rights movement. We know from quantitative and qualitative opinion research that African Americans worry about competition for jobs and lowering wages and this worry will be particularly acute during economic hard times. Publications whose target audience is African Americans are an important vehicle to raise awareness about how reform will lift all boats—the “move us forward together” part of the core narrative.

**Recommendation: Pitch stories and opinion pieces to African American outlets that demonstrate how the current system drives down wages for all low-income Americans.** In addition to responding well to the pro-immigrant core narratives, the African American participants in The Opportunity Agenda/Lake Research Partners focus groups had a positive response to the following “populist/anti-corporate” message:

“It just doesn’t make sense that we could have an immigration system that’s been broken for so long when Americans want it fixed. One reason for this is that Big Business likes cheap labor that they can control. We need a system that protects workers from exploitation and allows us to all rise together. What we don’t need is those with only an eye on greed and profit dictating how the immigration system should work.”

This audience should be educated about the shared harms of the broken immigration system along with the shared benefits of positive reform. Several African American Representatives, including Bobby Rush, Danny Davis, and Jesse Jackson, Jr., signed onto a letter to President Obama saying, “laws need to be passed that keep immigrant families together, protect workers and provide safe migration opportunities.” These and other leaders should be encouraged to be more vocal in their support for immigration reform, including in African American media.

## Conclusion

Now is the right time for advocates to use the power of the media to set the terms for the upcoming immigration debate to reflect what the majority of Americans think and promote a comprehensive reform of the immigration system. The public discourse is less toxic than in the past few years, and the American people realize that the current system is broken and are looking for solutions. More support some form of legalization today—with conditions—than in 2007 when Congress last took on the immigration issue. The current climate is good for advocates to frame the debate with a clear, values-based message and set the foundation to winning the public debate on immigration.

# Appendix

## **Mainstream print media outlets**

Atlanta Journal-Constitution  
Boston Globe  
Chicago Sun Times  
Los Angeles Times  
The New York Times  
Newsweek  
The Philadelphia Inquirer  
San Francisco Chronicle  
Time Magazine  
USA Today  
Wall Street Journal  
The Washington Post

## **White progressive print media**

The American Prospect  
The Nation  
The New Republic

## **African American print media**

Black Enterprise  
Ebony  
Jet

## **Broadcast media**

Democracy Now! (NPR)  
The Glenn Beck Program (Syndicated)  
The Ed Show (MSNBC)  
Hardball with Chris Matthews (MSNBC)  
Lou Dobbs Tonight (CNN)  
Morning Edition (NPR)  
News Hour with Jim Lehrer (PBS)  
The Rachel Maddow Show  
The Rush Limbaugh Show (Syndicated)  
The Tavis Smiley Show (PBS)



# PART II:

# Web 2.0 Coverage

## Executive Summary:

In just a few short years, we have witnessed a transformation in the most popular technologies and uses of the Internet. That change, in turn, is reshaping the media landscape and the public discourse. The readership of some mainstream blogs rivals those of major newspapers. Facebook recently hit 300 million users, triple the number of active users they had one year ago.<sup>7</sup> If Facebook were a country, its “population” would be approximately that of the United States. MySpace, although its growth has slowed (and possibly contracted),<sup>8</sup> is still the 11th most visited site on the web.<sup>9</sup> YouTube remains the go-to site for any sort of online video, and Twitter has officially entered the mainstream: Oprah did a show on it.

The common element among all of these technologies is that they may be classified as “Web 2.0,” also referred to as the “social web.” Simply put, these technologies rely on user-generated content. In a very real way, the success of Facebook depends on the musings of your high school friends and the photos uploaded by your cousin.

For those who seek commonsense immigration reform and the integration of immigrants into our national community, a robust and positive experience on the social web is crucial. Because Americans of all walks of life increasingly use these sites to learn about issues and build relationships, the information they encounter will shape their views and influence the broader public’s perceptions.<sup>10</sup> As we saw during the rancorous 2007 debate over immigration reform, online activism plays an important role in the legislative area. Advocates simply cannot afford to be underrepresented in this growing public space. Because these technologies increasingly influence public opinion and activism, The Opportunity Agenda conducted a scan to determine the state of immigration advocacy on the social web, looking specifically at the following: blogs that frequently cover politics and reach a mass audience, Twitter, YouTube, and the two largest social networking sites (Facebook and MySpace).

The goal of this scan is to identify the values, images, facts, and arguments that visitors to these sites typically encounter. As these sites continue to become major destinations (globally Facebook is the second most trafficked website in the world and YouTube is fourth),<sup>11</sup> people will turn to them for information and activism. We wanted to know what people see on these sites when they search for immigration-related topics. We were most curious about people we deem “persuadables”—those whose minds are not yet made up. It is in those hearts and minds that the battle for fair treatment and inclusion of immigrants will be fought. What do they see on the Internet?

---

7. Oreskovic, Alexei. (2009, September 16). Facebook makes money, tops 300 million users. *Reuters*. Retrieved September 16, 2009 from <http://www.reuters.com/article/technologyNews/idUSTRE58E7ZK20090916>.

8. Smith, David. (2009, March 29). MySpace shrinks as Facebook, Twitter and Bebo grab its users. *The Guardian*. Retrieved September 16, 2009 from <http://www.guardian.co.uk/technology/2009/mar/29/myspace-facebook-bebo-twitter>.

9. Top global sites listed on alexa.com as of September 15, 2009.

10. Initially these technologies were the preserve of youth with means, but increasingly more people have access to computers (or computer time), and all the technologies described in this report are increasingly popular with people of all ages.

11. Top global sites listed on alexa.com as of September 15, 2009.

## Immigration Web 2.0 In 2007

We conducted a similar scan in 2007. That scan found that, on social networking sites, anti-immigrant supporters and rhetoric outnumbered pro-immigrant activity by a ratio of two to one. Most keyword searches (e.g., “immigration”) produced more results for anti-immigrant than pro-immigrant activism and yielded little in the way of Facebook or MySpace groups run by pro-immigrant advocacy organizations. On YouTube, the most popular immigration-related videos were neutral, using humor to educate viewers about the issue. However, anti-immigrant videos maintained a significant lead over pro-immigrant videos, yielding both more search results and frequently a much higher viewership. The previous scan also looked at the blogosphere and found that mainstream progressive-leaning blogs were often not supportive of immigration issues, causing schisms in the normally ideologically homogenous communities. Finally, the scan described a nascent, but growing, immigrant blogosphere.

## Overview Of Major 2009 Findings

During our 10-week scan conducted during the summer of 2009, we found an almost complete turnaround from the results of our last Web 2.0 scan conducted approximately two years ago. We saw positive developments on Facebook and YouTube, and we found progressive-leaning mainstream blogs to be a friendlier environment for pro-immigration discourse than just two years ago.

### Social Networking Sites: Facebook and MySpace

On Facebook we saw a complete reversal of our 2007 findings. In the previous scan, on social networking sites anti-immigrant groups outnumbered those supporting commonsense immigration reform by approximately two to one. This summer, of 92 immigration-related Facebook groups scanned, 76 had a pro-immigrant message. Facebook also allows for “fan pages.” Of 15 scanned, 11 had a positive message. Groups on MySpace, meanwhile, had nearly no activity and the site seems to be declining generally as a communications and advocacy tool.

### YouTube

When we last looked at YouTube in 2007, the anti-immigration side was dominant. Search results on the topic found that videos taking a policy position were mostly anti-immigration, often with high viewership. In the summer of 2009, however, videos in support of immigration slightly outnumbered videos from the other side. Many of the comments following the videos, however, frequently are laden with offensive, anti-immigration rhetoric.

### Blogs

In 2007 we found major progressive-leaning blogs to be unsafe territory for immigration advocates. Today, however, the climate is much more receptive. Major progressive blogs discuss immigration, and the comments are usually constructive. Meanwhile the pro-immigration-specific blogosphere is thriving. One such blog, Citizen Orange, counts 103 blogs actively advocating for practical immigration reform.<sup>12</sup>

---

12. See Appendix A.

## Twitter

Our first look at Twitter differentiated between two groups among those who “tweet.” First, those whose messages consistently discussed immigration were more likely to have pro-immigration messaging than those with anti-immigration messages by a ratio of approximately two to one. Also, about half of immigration tweets by those not identified as frequently discussing the topic could be classified as pro-immigrant. These messages, however, were more likely to include ambiguous or neutral tweets (e.g., a link to a neutral news story). This is significant because, increasingly, people seem to be searching for up-to-the minute news and Twitter is part of this trend.

# Social Networks

Research conducted for this scan shows a landscape transformed. In 2007 anti-immigrant groups dominated social networking sites approximately two to one. Today the majority of groups on Facebook with a focus on immigration support commonsense reform. MySpace, meanwhile, seems to no longer serve as an active tool for advocacy.

## Methodology

We examined Facebook and MySpace, searching by the following key words to find immigration-related groups: immigration, immigrant, DREAM Act, Comprehensive Reform, amnesty, undocumented, and illegals. “Groups” on Facebook and MySpace are composed of members who may use discussion boards and post content, such as photos, videos, and textual information. Our search was limited to groups containing at least 100 members, and we identified for examination 92 groups. Finally, the search also included Facebook “fan pages,” which allow users to “become a fan” of the individual, organization, or cause. We found 15 pages specifically covering immigration topics.

## Facebook

### The Current Playing Field

Facebook has become a popular social networking tool for pro-immigrant advocates. Although anti-immigrant supporters and rhetoric still exist on Facebook, most key word searches produced more results for pro-immigrant than anti-immigrant activism, a notable change from 2007. Of the 92 groups scanned, 76 could be categorized as pro-immigrant.

Of 15 fan pages scanned, 11 are pro-immigrant groups. Many of these fan pages have groups with the same title because Facebook originally offered both options without much clarity as to the differences. Pages look and behave much like a Facebook user’s personal private profile. Similar to groups, creators of fan pages can send updates to their fans. In addition, these fan pages consistently update with news stories and have a virtual wall where fans may post their comments. The largest immigration-related fan page is *OBAMA: Pass the DREAM ACT!*, with 16,628 Facebook fans. Similarly, the Facebook group with the same title had the largest membership among groups (16,538).<sup>13</sup>

---

13. All group numbers in this section are as of July 15, 2009

At least on Facebook, most of the groups and fan pages saw their membership rolls increase during the course of the scan. (We took this as another sign of Facebook's continuing importance.) Not only were the groups gaining membership, but there was also activity within them. This is key to ensuring return visits. Wall posts and discussion boards were active throughout the summer, with immigration news updates and video. Members usually comment on stories or voice their opinion about issues, often supporting the group's mission.

It is important to note that many groups are often in support of causes more so than specific organizations. There are specific groups dedicated to organizations, but most groups on the pro-immigration side were created in support of specific causes: *Demand an End to the ICE Raids and Support Comprehensive Immigration Reform* (7,152 members) or *Outraged at Arpaio: Together to Stop Immigrant Bashing* (3,024 members). Groups in support of LGBTQ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and questioning) rights and immigration also have large group memberships, all with more than 1,000 members. Although there is still anti-immigrant activity, with groups like *Stop Illegal Immigration!* (4,221 members) and others, overall the memberships for pro-immigrant groups were significantly larger than many of the anti-immigrant groups.

In the group *Obama: Pass the DREAM ACT!*, there was a large focus on having as many people as possible connected to what is going on with DREAM Act advocacy. The group highlighted three ways to stay involved. The first was to "Join the 'DREAM Act' PAGE to get news and action alerts." The second prompted members to invite their Facebook friends to join the group. Finally, the third asked users to sign an online petition. The group *Demand an End to the ICE Raids and Support Comprehensive Immigration Reform* also asked members to invite others to join and to post information, photos, videos, and discussion board topics related to this issue to galvanize visitors in calling for the end of raids immediately. Like several groups, members would share personal stories such as "ICE agents in my neighborhood in Lakewood WA just raided an Apt. building this evening around 7:30pm, leaving women and children in the streets. People were begging 'Just leave them alone, they're families!'" Another group *1 million people in support of passing the Uniting American Families Act*, created by the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force and Immigration Equality, kept members informed through news updates. These groups would feature comments in support of the activism around the issue: "I really hope that this Act becomes law. In 2009 it's sad that this supposedly progressive country still denies rights for some groups. My heart weeps for what America is."

Although Facebook does attempt to inform members of updates to the fan pages and groups to which they belong, we are unable to measure the penetration of these messages. We instead used membership numbers as a crude measure of enthusiasm for the cause. During a time when possible immigration reform was in the news, June and July 2009, there was a greater increase in membership for groups promoting practical immigration reform than for the anti groups.

## MySpace

Turning our attention to MySpace, in our 2007 scan we saw more activity by anti-immigration groups than by pro-immigration voices. MySpace continues to feature mostly anti-immigrant groups, but most of these were created in 2006 or 2007 and have subsequently been dormant. So, although the scan showed 19 MySpace groups specific to immigration with 12 classifiable as anti-immigrant, no groups have been recently created.

In this interim of approximately two years between scans, group numbers on MySpace stayed virtually the same, with only one anti-immigrant group (*Stop Illegal Immigration*) adding to its group membership by only two members. This is in sharp contrast to the anti-immigrant presence on Facebook, with their groups continuing to add members through our scan, albeit in lower numbers than pro-immigration groups. Thus, it appears that anti-immigrant advocates have not recently used MySpace to organize on issues, as they did two years ago regarding the Sensenbrenner proposal in the House—the Border Protection, Antiterrorism, and Illegal Immigration Control Act of 2005. Groups from this effort are still on MySpace. Many comments date back to 2007 for anti-immigrant groups. Pro-immigration activism is similarly dormant on MySpace.

## Conclusions

Given the findings of our 2007 scan, it is exciting to see the complete turnaround of the pro-immigration presence on social networking sites. With the apparent decline of MySpace as an advocacy tool, the most relevant numbers pertain to Facebook, where we saw most groups increase their rolls during the course of the scan. Emblematic of the trends we saw is the story of two groups with opposing aims. Following the convention seen often on Facebook, advocates on both sides of the immigration debate attempted to get one million supporters to join their group to show strength in numbers. Although both fell well short of their goal, the group in favor of immigration reform, *1,000,000 Strong For Immigrant Rights*, ended the period of our scan with 5,156 members, whereas the group *1,000,000 strong AGAINST the illegal immigration invasion* consisted of only 129 members by the time our scan ended.

# YouTube

When we looked at YouTube in 2007, the anti-immigration side was winning. Although the most popular immigration videos were ideologically neutral, advocacy-related search results on the topic found mostly anti-immigration videos, often with high viewership. In the summer of 2009, however, videos in support of immigration outnumbered videos from the other side. Many of the comments following the videos, however, are frequently laden with offensive, anti-immigration rhetoric.

## Methodology

When searching YouTube, the default option is to search by “relevance.” In keeping with our attempts to mimic what most users would see in their experience, this remained our search procedure for the scan. The first page of videos was analyzed each week. This means that the traffic and comments of some videos were analyzed all five weeks because they continued to come up in our search, whereas some were analyzed only once.

## Current Playing Field

Perhaps the most notable finding for this scan of YouTube is a strong trend toward pro-immigrant messaging that seemed inconceivable only two years ago. This is reflected in raw numbers: 74 pro-immigration videos to 66 anti-immigration videos and 12 neutral videos (often humorous but always without an agenda). Although this puts pro-immigrant videos only slightly ahead of anti-immigrant videos, any majority should be viewed as a significant gain for immigrant rights activists.

A closer look at the data shows an even more significant lead for those advocating commonsense immigration reform. Pro-immigrant videos came up far more consistently than did anti-immigrant videos, which typically would appear in the top search results one week and disappear the next. Almost half of the anti-immigrant videos analyzed appeared only once during the scan. By contrast, only a quarter of the pro-immigrant videos were similarly transient. This means that pro-immigrant voices consistently hold a place in YouTube’s top search results when searching by relevance. Again, this is the default YouTube search setting, so the typical search experience of YouTube users, when they are interested in immigration, would result in these pro-immigration videos. Today pro-immigrant videos almost always outnumber anti-immigrant videos in top YouTube search results.

In response to many YouTube clips, anti-immigrant comments were prevalent and often profane. These comments are representative of the kind of senseless hate comments frequently posted: *“they all just need to die of swine flue the dirty scumbags.”* *“It would be a different story if you had any admirable qualities to speak of—whites are progressive leaders, most blacks (especially those in Africa) are strong and agriculturally wise, yellows are numerically inclined and tech-saavy, but you browns are capable only of showing up in packs of twenty.”* Such comments pepper YouTube. It should be noted that more common and perhaps more threatening comments include widespread appeals to fears of immigrants’ lawlessness and assertions that they *“steal American resources.”*

Pro-immigrant comments also run the gamut, from the “stolen land” argument to discussions of the contributions immigrants make to the United States economy and society. For example: *“Allowing these students (and productive members of society) access to higher education means only that the place they call home (THE USA) is going to allow them to work and pay taxes. If you came here when you were 2 yrs old (or under 10) chances are, you consider this your home. \*shrugs\*...”*

The content of videos varies in efficacy of message as broadly as do the comments. They range from amateur racist rants to professional videos like *“Immigration Gumballs”*<sup>14</sup> by NumbersUSA’s Roy Beck and *“Illegal Aliens and Tuberculosis”*<sup>15</sup> by Madeline Cosman. Many of the more powerful videos use footage from the mainstream media, especially Lou Dobbs and Bill O’Reilly. However, despite the surge in pro-immigrant videos, the anti-immigrant advocates have mobilized more people who comment, perhaps because of their appeals by authority figures. By contrast, pro-immigrant videos and comments tend to appeal to compassion and America’s long relationship with immigration.

Some pro-immigration videos stand out. For example, GOOD Magazine created a video full of hard data, including some on the contributions of immigrants to American society, the history of immigration in the United States, and the number of deaths resulting from our broken immigration system.<sup>16</sup> Additionally, the Center for American Progress created a compelling video called *“Why We Need Comprehensive Immigration Reform.”*<sup>17</sup> Last, one progressive example provides a contrast to the anti-immigrant habit of including anti-immigrant messages from the mainstream media: a clip by CNN about a UCLA student who would benefit from the DREAM Act. Although the video is quite positive and speaks to the great contributions that immigrants could make to American society, its impact is limited by choosing to focus on an episodic incident of what is really a systemic problem.<sup>18</sup>

## Conclusions

Advocates for immigration reform have increased their presence on YouTube. Most YouTube searches on the topic yield mostly pro-immigration videos. Unfortunately, many of the comments left by users are often anti-immigrant and frequently malicious.

---

14. The video is available at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=n7WJeqxuOfQ>.

15. “Illegal Aliens and Tuberculosis” can be found at [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=\\_ahEhcVW7oQ](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_ahEhcVW7oQ).

16. The GOOD Magazine video can be found at [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Q3JToii4Aq4&feature=channel\\_page](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Q3JToii4Aq4&feature=channel_page).

17. The Center for American Progress video can be found at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hRK24N28ZTM>.

18. This CNN video is called “ucla dream act” and may be viewed at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Bp172QI0GfE>.

# Blogs

As with other parts of this analysis, the goal of the blogosphere scan was to learn what “persuadables” might see. These are people who have not made up their minds about immigration issues or simply do not follow the topic. Currently, excellent work is being done on blogs that focus solely on immigration issues, but that was not the focus of this report.

In 2007 we found progressive-leaning blogs to be unsafe territory for immigration advocates. Today, however, the climate is much more receptive. Major progressive blogs discuss immigration, and the comments are usually positive.

## Methodology

In our efforts to analyze the discourse of those blogs reaching the most people, we looked at the list of Top 100 blogs on Technorati, a blog search engine. From this list we chose the first 10 that consistently covered issues of political relevance. The blogs were The Huffington Post, Think Progress, DailyKos, the Daily Dish, the CNN Political Ticker, Michelle Malkin, The Caucus of The New York Times, Gawker, Pajama Media, and TreeHugger.

We should note that although Gawker may not immediately seem political, the blog periodically covers politics and it reaches a broad audience distinct from most of the mainstream political blogs. We saw Gawker as an opportunity to examine news that those who have not made their mind up about immigration might follow. An example was one of their posts “*Were Valley Immigrants Traded Like Property? Feds Wonder*,”<sup>19</sup> which received 3,123 views and discussed a Justice Department investigation that raised the possibility that Google, Apple, and Yahoo, among others, colluded to hold down wages for immigrants.

## The Current Playing Field

We found that only the progressive blogs we monitored (such as The Huffington Post, DailyKos, and Think Progress) discussed immigration topics on a consistent basis. More conservative blogs (Pajama Media and Michelle Malkin) blogged less than five times each on the topic of immigration throughout our 10-week scan and mainly in response to what was popular in immigration news at the moment, such as health care and undocumented immigrants or the E-Verify system. Most comments on conservative blogs praised the content written and frequently included anti-immigrant language. Throughout our scan, The Huffington Post, DailyKos, and Think Progress consistently blogged on immigration issues. For example, The Huffington Post published articles by immigrant advocates throughout the scan. Think Progress had a section for immigration with blog postings almost every day. DailyKos featured consistent postings in the form of “diaries” by immigration organizations.

Overall, immigration news received an inconsistent number of readers—at least as measured by visitor comments. Many times specific blog postings would receive a high number of comments, whereas sometimes articles would not receive any. The form of these blog posts also varied. Some blogs would solely publish small blurbs about an article and then provide a link to the original source material. For instance, on The Huffington Post, “*Gibbs: We Don’t Have The Votes For Immigration Reform*”<sup>20</sup> received 260 comments, but there was very limited original content in this post aside from a link to

19. Tate, Ryan. (2009, June 3). Were Valley Immigrants Traded Like Property? Feds Wonder. *Gawker*. Retrieved September 18, 2009 from <http://gawker.com/5277692/were-valley-immigrants-traded-like-property-feds-wonder>.

20. (2009, June 19). Gibbs: We Don’t Have The Votes For Immigration Reform. *The Huffington Post*. Retrieved September 18, 2009 from [http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2009/06/19/gibbs-we-dont-have-the-vo\\_n\\_218256.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2009/06/19/gibbs-we-dont-have-the-vo_n_218256.html).

a newspaper article. In contrast, a blog post on Huffington called “*American Ignorance*”<sup>21</sup> written as pure commentary about how new immigrants to the United States often know more of this country’s history than those born in the United States, received only 15 comments.

For the most part, comments in response to immigration blog postings in these progressive blogs had positive comments. Anti-immigrant rhetoric, of course, would also appear. When it did, blog comments often featured a back and forth conversation among readers. This was particularly the trend on Think Progress. Those with more anti-immigrant views would post their comments and sometimes used data from NumbersUSA or other anti-immigrant organizations to back up their claims, but pro-immigrant bloggers would quickly refute their comments and provide additional support to the post.

DailyKos, in comparison to any other blog, had the largest response by far in terms of comments. The comments section for many blog posts often serves as a discussion forum. Entries on immigration topics written by Kos, the online moniker of founder Markos Moulistas, had the largest readership of any on that topic on this blog. For example, in his post “*The absurdities in immigration policy*,” Kos blogged about a DREAM Act student whose impending deportation had come to the attention of many in the blogosphere, and the post received 181 comments.<sup>22</sup> Most of these were in support, but anti-immigrant comments also appeared. This level of response is typical for Kos postings and, as such, this may be a productive forum in which to engage persuadable readers. When possible, however, comments should be made quickly. Average readers, without strong opinions on the matter, are unlikely to read beyond the first few.

We must also highlight the CNN Political Ticker, a blog featuring the latest news stories from CNN. Although during this scan this blog had comparatively fewer stories on this topic than the progressive blogs mentioned previously, each immigration-related post did result in approximately 30 or 40 comments—most of which would be classified as being against practical immigration reform. Moreover, some used particularly harsh language. However, the CNN Political Ticker has significant reach and its readership includes those from a wider political spectrum.<sup>23</sup> Particularly when done quickly, comments can insert different viewpoints into the discussion.

## Conclusions

Blogs continue to increase in popularity, and advocates for practical immigration reform have taken advantage of this new medium. In comparison to our scan two years ago, the progress that pro-immigrant voices have made in this space is striking.

---

21. Kaplan, Isabel. (2009, July 13). *American Ignorance*. *The Huffington Post*. Retrieved September 18, 2009 from [http://www.huffingtonpost.com/isabel-kaplan/american-ignorance\\_b\\_229769.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/isabel-kaplan/american-ignorance_b_229769.html).

22. Moulistas, Markos. (2009, July 2). *The absurdities of current immigration policy*. *DailyKos*. Retrieved September 16, 2009 from <http://www.dailykos.com/story/2009/7/2/749208/-The-absurdities-of-current-immigration-policy>.

23. It’s ranked #29 on Technorati’s list of the Top 100 blogs (as of September 15, 2009).

# Twitter

Twitter has made its presence felt in the American media—from Oprah Winfrey recently featuring the tool on her show to cable news shows’ incorporation of “tweets” as viewer feedback into their broadcasting. According to the blog *Nielsen Wire*, Twitter is now mentioned on blogs, message boards, and forums with the same frequency as is Facebook, which is four times its size.<sup>24</sup> Indeed, Twitter is not only pervasive but also unique compared to other new media. For example, its users tend to be older than those of most other social networking sites and even Internet users in general. According to the same Nielsen Wire study, “Adults are trying Twitter at nearly double the rate [of those younger than age 25].” Twitter is also special for its sheer simplicity—the site is easy to use because everyone can come up with enough content to fill 140 characters. (In fact, the challenge is to succinctly convey your message given this limitation.) Even these terse communications can lead to a wide readership. Thus, it could be said that the Twitter demographic is more democratic than YouTube (people can more easily tweet than create videos) and older than Facebook or MySpace, and it is remarkably accessible to anyone.

## Methodology

We used Twitter’s search engine ([search.twitter.com](http://search.twitter.com)) to conduct this scan. In the early days of Twitter, users needed to add hashtags to be searchable. An example of a tweet with a hashtag might look like this: “We need real reform now! #immigration” Note the symbol ahead of the word immigration. This is a hashtag. Although hashtags are still common, they are no longer necessary. On [search.twitter.com](http://search.twitter.com) we searched the term “immigration.” We also took note of the extent to which Twitterers were tweeting consistently about immigration or not, along with number of followers and their stance with regard to immigration.

## Current Playing Field

Our results showed an interesting relationship between consistency of immigration tweets and intensity of political beliefs on immigration. Among those who consistently tweeted about immigration, pro-immigration voices outnumbered those against by more than two to one. For inconsistent Twitter users, the results were similarly lopsided but with a group of ambiguous or neutral tweets equal to the negative tweets. As those numbers indicate, those who did not consistently tweet about immigration tended to be more moderate than consistent immigration Twitter users. There were 15 times as many ambiguous or neutral tweets by inconsistent immigration Twitter users than by consistent immigration Twitter users. Ambiguous tweets often pointed toward relatively neutral news stories. For example, the International Center for Journalists tweeted: “USA Today Will Live Stream Monday’s Panel on Language and Immigration <http://bit.ly/DERql>.”

Why were so many more ambivalent tweets coming from those who inconsistently tweet about immigration? Twitter predominately serves to document “everyday” occurrences. Thus, people feel comfortable musing rather than raving. Additionally, the site is less anonymous than other forums like YouTube—another deterrent from ranting. Although people made plenty of strongly worded, politically charged comments (e.g., “*Why is everyone so afraid to say what the real problem with schools & healthcare really is: illegal immigration. Do the research!*”), hateful outbursts were phenomenally fewer and farther between than on YouTube. Most tweets, with their moderate tone, constitute a stark contrast from the vitriol and violent rhetoric in comment after comment on YouTube videos.

---

24. Martin, David and MacDonald, Sue. (2009, July 30). Teens Don’t Tweet; Twitter’s Growth Not Fueled By Youth. *Nielsen Wire*. Retrieved August 6, 2009 from [http://blog.nielsen.com/nielsenwire/online\\_mobile/teens-dont-tweet-twitters-growth-not-fueled-by-youth/](http://blog.nielsen.com/nielsenwire/online_mobile/teens-dont-tweet-twitters-growth-not-fueled-by-youth/).

# Recommendations

Based on what we saw during the course of the scan, we offer a few recommendations for using Web 2.0 technology in promoting commonsense immigration reform.

## Social Networking Sites

First, we wish to point out the success of DREAM Act–related groups on Facebook. Of all the immigration groups on the site, these were the most popular in terms of membership. We speculate that an important reason for this was the ability of these groups to consistently update their content and have active members routinely post information and news related to the DREAM Act.<sup>25</sup> This is key. Members often need to see the vibrancy of a group before they will participate. Once they do, these members’ networks see this activity and learn of the group. It is this cycle, we believe, that led to much of the success seen by these groups.

Our crude measure for participation in these groups, membership, is not uncommon. As seen by the proliferation of Facebook groups looking for “1,000,000 for...” any number of causes, it would help the movement to combine its numbers to show unity and support for practical immigration reform. The best example, again, is the DREAM Act with its 33 different groups advocating for the same piece of legislation. Despite the difficulties in doing so, it would be beneficial to work toward fewer groups and higher membership rolls.

## YouTube

In our last scan, our main recommendation was that pro-immigrant advocates “flood the zone” with video content. We suggested that immigrant rights groups with the capacity to film and upload video to the Internet should do so in an effort to equalize the *amount* of pro-immigrant content on the site with anti-immigrant content. The results of our scan show that this has been accomplished.

Moving forward, we must not let up. We must continue to produce content and upload it to YouTube so that we do not lose our new lead. In pursuit of that goal we recommend organizations with media capabilities attempt to adopt the norms of the YouTube community and tailor their videos to that audience. This would entail working with animators and creative people on videos that use symbols and language of the online culture, including humor as a teaching tool. Additionally, pro-immigrant groups should look at YouTube as a distribution channel for rapid responses to current events and as a venue for media criticism.

## Blogs

When attempting to gain influence in mainstream blogs, we would recommend not engaging in conversation on explicitly conservative blogs (e.g., Michelle Malkin). Even during this past summer, when immigration was a top story in the news more often than usual, conservative blogs did not cover the issue with any frequency. When they do cover the issue, the readership does not include what we would call “persuadable” audiences. Given the limited resources we often face, it is not worth the effort to engage on these websites.

---

25. The specific relevance of the DREAM Act to young people likely also contributed to their popularity. Young people are most likely to use Facebook on more than a superficial level.

Instead, we recommend continuing to work to place stories on mainstream blogs that generally lean progressive. Although not every time, immigration posts on these blogs often generate a lot of comments, which is indicative of a high readership. We recommend making comments that push forward our messaging in an effective manner.

Finally, when we are unable to place stories on the main pages of these blogs, many allow users to create “diaries.” Usually anyone, or any organization, may create a diary. This provides a forum with access to the readership of these blogs. Posts appear in a diaries section, which usually appears alongside posts on the front page of the blog; however, they scroll quickly as new ones are posted. This still allows for the potential of high readership. Occasionally, the owners of the blog will highlight well-written and insightful diary posts in a front-page blog post.

## Twitter

Twitter is remarkably useful in directing attention toward articles or other web pages. This is evidenced by the fact that the most typical tweet consisted of an author pointing the reader toward a news story or a blog. For example: “*Secret Courts Exploit Migrants HT @thenation #immigration #detention http://digg.com/u16UCc.*” Because of this capacity, Twitter is an important tool for directing attention and conversations on the Internet through search engine optimization—or pushing favorable web materials up in search results for specific terms. A recent blog by Sarah Burris on *Future Majority* discusses some best practices for using Twitter to campaign.<sup>26</sup> Burris notes that Twitter can even direct political discussions in regions, states, and small cities. She gives the example of a campaign against a Kansas GOP initiative wherein anti-GOP activists used “KSGOP” as a hashtag in their Twitter campaign. The result was a reordering of Google search results: “People made fun of us, asking why we were promoting progressive values like getting paid all while labeling it with KSGOP? It seemed silly. Until about three o’clock that afternoon when a Google search for KSGOP revealed our blogs as the #1 search. Second was the thread on search.twitter.com for our hashtag, and third was the KSGOP’s website, which by the way, is [www.ksgop.com](http://www.ksgop.com).”

Twitter is currently dominated by voices for commonsense immigration reform. We suggest using Twitter because it requires a low commitment—each missive must be no more than 140 characters—and we believe there is a trend toward a “real-time web” where people expect news immediately. For example, when US Airways Flight 1549 first made an emergency landing in the Hudson River off of Manhattan, the first images of the plane were posted on Twitter.<sup>27</sup> It is not uncommon today for the technologically savvy to check Twitter, much as we did for this immigration scan, in an attempt to learn the latest on an issue. As this trend continues, a Twitter search could be much more common. If this happens, we want our immigration messaging to come to the fore.

Finally, a hint to help limit the length of tweets is to use a URL shortener. These free websites create a new, short web address for existing web pages. For instance, the PDF version of The Opportunity Agenda talking points on building support for commonsense immigration reform is available at a website with a very long URL; however, using a URL shortener, the PDF is also available here: <http://bit.ly/s6JiD>.<sup>28</sup> Clearly, this helps with Twitter’s 140-character limit. We recommend using the URL shortener bit.ly because it allows you to track how many clicks your new URL received. Visit the site at <http://bit.ly>

---

26. Burris, Sarah. (2009, August 3). Twitter as an Advocacy & Hatchet Tool. *Future Majority*. Retrieved August 7, 2009 from <http://futuremajority.com/node/8387>.

27. Beaumont, Claudine. (2009, January 16). New York plane crash: Twitter breaks the news, again. *The Telegraph*. Retrieved September 18, 2009 from <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/technology/twitter/4269765/New-York-plane-crash-Twitter-breaks-the-news-again.html>.

28. The original URL is [http://opportunityagenda.org/files/field\\_file/Talking%20Points%20-%20A%20Winning%20Narrative%20on%20Immigration%20%282009%29.pdf](http://opportunityagenda.org/files/field_file/Talking%20Points%20-%20A%20Winning%20Narrative%20on%20Immigration%20%282009%29.pdf).

# Conclusions

We are witnessing the increasing importance of Web 2.0 technologies in all facets of our lives. It is for this very reason that immigration activists must occupy this space. Our recent findings show that we are well on our way. In each of the social media described, pro-immigration messaging is now the majority of what is available, a stark contrast to our scan from just two years ago. But it is not enough for us to simply create content for these technologies. We must take advantage of the freedom inherent in these tools. The technology allows us to be precise about how we frame our argument. Particularly with the Obama administration expected to push for immigration reform early next year, this is an opportunity to produce and present our content unfiltered. The findings of this report show a promising start, but we must not relinquish our current lead. The social web is wildly popular and we have no reason to believe that will change. We must use it to our advantage.

# Talking About Immigration

Over the past two years pro-immigration advocates and communications experts have developed a pro-immigrant narrative designed to move hearts, minds, and policy. Rooted in experience and recent research, this “Core Narrative” is a set of broad themes and values that helps to connect with persuadable audiences and build support for change. Anti-immigrant spokespeople have a clear narrative with two main elements: law and order and the overwhelming of scarce resources.

The pro-immigration narrative has three main elements: (1) Workable Solutions; (2) Upholding Our Nation’s Values; and (3) Moving Forward Together. Each element can be expressed in different ways and with different, but related, messages and arguments.<sup>29</sup>

As social web platforms like Twitter and Facebook continue to dominate online messaging, messengers need to become even more effective at framing the debate within a fixed number of not just words but characters. Although newspapers like *The New York Times* or *The Washington Post* still accept editorials with around 800 words and letters to the editor with around 150 words, advocates on social sites like Twitter are limited to only 140 characters, meaning every single letter counts. Following are a few examples of how strategic messaging can be used within the context of the social web. Each of the examples incorporates the Core Narrative using less than 140 characters. When room permits, the tweets incorporate hashtags for easy searching.

- ▶ Hate fixes nothing, but real solutions can lift us all up together. #immigration #CIR
- ▶ We’re all in it together. When it comes to immigration reform, we can bring about real change that moves us all forward together.
- ▶ We only get one life to live. Why should anyone die because of a broken immigration system? <http://www.restorefairness.org> #immigration #CIR

Notice that in each of these examples, the message starts with a statement rooted in values found within the greater Core Narrative. Values like fairness, dignity, community, and opportunity help engage persuadable audiences, allowing readers who might be on the fence to identify with the message poster from the very beginning. In the final example, a link to a particular video is provided that spells out in more detail the issue being posted and offers much greater detail on solutions and action. The post, in this instance, is a hook that lures the reader to sites that have much greater depth in content.

---

29. Visit <http://bit.ly/s6jiD> to read more about utilizing the Core Narrative.

# Appendix A

## Finding Pro-Immigration Content Online

### Facebook

Top Five Pro-Immigration Facebook Groups (by membership)	Number of Fans
OBAMA: Pass the DREAM ACT (Group)	16,139
Demand an End to the ICE raids and Support Comprehensive Immigration Reform	6,852
1,000,000 Strong For Immigrant Rights!	4,995
Stop Illegal Immigration	4,036
DREAM Act...United we DREAM	3,635

### Blogosphere

The goal of this scan was to mimic the user experience of an average Internet user. As such, we took a close look at some of the most popular blogs on the web. However, we would like to highlight the great work of bloggers actively pushing for sensible immigration reform. The blog Citizen Orange recently attempted to catalog all blogs that fall into this category. His final count was 103 blogs. For a full list, see his blogroll at <http://www.citizenorange.com/orange/>.

### Twitter

Some of the most consistent tweeters about immigration included the following:

Twitter Username	Description
CCIR	Christians for Comprehensive Immigration Reform
ForumDriv	An immigration advocate
ilwcom	A leading news resource for immigration professionals
sanctuaryfeed	The Twitter feed of promigrant.org
willcoley	An immigration advocate

To visit their Twitter pages, simply type in their name after [twitter.com](https://twitter.com) (e.g., [twitter.com/CCIR](https://twitter.com/CCIR)).





# The **Opportunity** Agenda

*Building the National Will  
to Expand Opportunity in America*

The Opportunity Agenda  
568 Broadway  
Suite 302  
New York, NY 10012  
Tel: 212.334.5977  
Fax: 212.334.2656

[www.opportunityagenda.org](http://www.opportunityagenda.org)

The Opportunity Agenda is a project of Tides Center.