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Includes Pre-Spray Traffic Area (Hallway Extra)

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Area/Oriental Rugs (Wool): \$40.00 Minimum

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# OPINION

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## Get Sensible about Immigration

Ill-fated economic policies deserve some blame

BY COLETTE COSNER

On Mother's Day, three months before Arizona's draconian new immigration law was to go into effect, a mother of two addressed a vigil outside of an Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) detention center.

The woman had been intercepted, without papers, on her way to work. Unable to fight back tears, she told the crowd of the months she spent in this privatized detention center, wondering if she would ever see her children again.

Arizona's new law, which goes into effect Sunday, will legalize racial profiling by requiring of-

ficers to pull over, question, and detain anyone they have a "reasonable suspicion" of being undocumented. The law has catalyzed the grassroots immigrant rights movement, driving hundreds of thousands of activists into the streets demanding comprehensive immigration reform.



However, given President Barack Obama's recent comments, the chances of a national overhaul in immigration policy is unlikely to happen this year. And with the failure of reform at the federal level, states are taking matters into their own hands, drafting and passing cruel anti-immigrant laws that mirror Arizona's legislation.

States are also embracing a controversial federal program that essentially lets local authorities convert police officers into de facto ICE agents. (ICE is the agency that used to be called the Immigration and Naturalization

Service, or INS.)

The Obama administration should scrap enforcement-only policies that separate families and encourage raids, deportations, border militarization, and racial profiling. To achieve sustainable immigration policies, we'll need to consider the roots of migration. What's pushing people to leave Latin America in the first place?

On a recent Witness for Peace Speaker's tour, Baldemar Mendoza Jimenez, a farmer and agriculture expert from the Mexican state of Oaxaca, described how the North America Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) undermined traditional agriculture. Unable to compete with subsidized grains imported from the States, millions of farmers were forced out of work.

"Many [farmers] could not make ends meet. They abandoned their lands, left to work in factories and emigrated to the United States."

Jimenez's story isn't unique, but this perspective is largely unaccounted for in the immigration debate. In general, undocumented immigrants and their communities get blamed for the situation, rather than the ill-fated economic policies that displaced those immigrants.

Not one of the 4,130 words in Obama's most recent speech on immigration addressed why people migrate. He didn't address unfair trade, mention displaced farmers, or acknowledge that the immigration rate doubled after NAFTA transformed U.S.-Mexican trade.

The situation in Arizona demonstrates that we need to overhaul our immigration policies. If we want to stem or slow the flow of undocumented workers into the United States, however, we'll also need to revamp our foreign economic policies.

Colette Cosner is a regional organizer with Witness for Peace.