

Somos un Pueblo Unido Newsletter

August/September 2008

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### **Don't miss "Workers' Party in the Park"**

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Join us at Santa Fe's 9th Annual Labor Day Celebration "Workers' Party in the Park" on Monday, September 1st. This year's pachanga will include free food for everyone, entertainment, information booths, voter registration and great Mariachi, Marimba and Hip Hop.

What: Workers' Party at the Park

Where: Franklin Miles Park at Camino Carlos Rey and Siringo Road

When: Monday, September 1st.

Time: 11 AM to 2 PM

Co-organizers include: Somos Un Pueblo Unido, Drug Policy Alliance, Living Wage Network, NAACP, AFSCME, Communications Workers of America, NM Conference of Churches. Hilton's ex-housekeepers will also be at the party to share their experiences with other workers.

Former Hilton Housekeepers Continue Fight for Justice

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After investigating allegations by fourteen former Hilton housekeepers in Santa Fe, the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) found sufficient evidence that a labor violation indeed occurred and decided to issue a formal complaint against the hotel for illegally firing the workers for engaging in protected concerted activity. The NLRB is seeking a remedy of lost wages as well as reinstatement for the workers.

Because the Hilton Hotel did not voluntarily remedy the matter, the NLRB, a federal agency that enforces the National Labor Relations Act, set a hearing before an Administrative Law Judge for late July, but Hilton representatives filed to postpone it and requested a settlement hearing be held instead. The NLRB and Hilton's legal representatives have been trying to negotiate a settlement, but have not yet come to an agreement. If no agreement is reached, the NLRB says it will set a date for a trial in mid-September.

The housekeepers claim that after complaining to hotel management about their excessive workload and unsafe working conditions, they were told they had no rights and were fired. Under the law, workers have the right to collectively organize and fight for better working conditions without retaliation.

There is also an active investigation by the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) regarding a discrimination complaint lodged by the workers. These federal complaint processes are long and time consuming, but the housekeepers' tenacity demonstrates their determination to see justice done.

### **Somos Monitors DWI Checkpoint in Santa Fe**

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On July 3rd, twenty-five members of *Somos Un Pueblo Unido* monitored a DWI checkpoint on Agua Fria Road in Santa Fe. Somos had received multiple complaints about ICE agents showing up at checkpoints in New Mexico. Marcela Díaz, Executive Director of Somos, inquired with State Police Sergeant Eugene Bess if police planned to stick to proper DWI procedures and not summon ICE or detain immigrants solely based on their immigration status. "We're not here to ask about immigration status," assured Sgt. Bess. Still, Somos members monitored the checkpoint for several hours. Some carried signs that said "Don't Call ICE" and "ICE Threatens Public Safety."

Somos felt compelled to organize this action because 16 immigrants were detained and deported by ICE at a DWI checkpoint sponsored by State Police and Santa Fe's Sheriff in June. These law enforcement agencies were unable to clarify who called ICE or why the motorists were questioned about their immigration status in the first place. Vehicular checkpoints beyond 100 miles of the border, of course, cannot be used to apprehend undocumented motorists and their families.

If you would like to participate in actions like this one, actions that help keep our community safe from civil rights abuses, call us at 424-7832.

You can read more about *Somos'* action at La Voz de Nuevo México:
<http://www.santafenewmexican.com/La%20Voz/>

Presidential Candidates Make Speeches on Immigration Reform

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After several months of virtual silence from both presidential candidates on immigration, Senator Barack Obama spoke about his plans to legalize millions of immigrants living and working in the country. On July 13th, he made a much

anticipated speech at the National Council of La Raza (NCLR) Annual Conference in San Diego, stating that immigration reform that includes legalization would be one of his top priorities in his first year in office.

On July 14th, Senator John McCain also answered questions on the hot issue at the NCLR event. He chose to focus only on his plans to "secure" the border. See the speeches for yourself by clicking on these links:

## **News from around the country**

### **A National Invitation to "Self-Deport" by ICE a BIG Flop!**

Undocumented immigrants were "invited" by some local and state governments, and the Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) agency to participate in the pilot program "Operation Scheduled Departure" which ended on August 22. Under the program, if an undocumented worker decided to "self-deport", he would not be held in detention for a lengthy period of time, however, he would have an official deportation on his record. The government even offered to assist with or pay for travel arrangements to the immigrant's country of origin. Not surprisingly, only eight immigrants participated in the pilot program across the country, according to ICE reports.

In an excellent statement released on July 29th, the National Immigration Forum declared "this new policy is a tacit recognition on the part of ICE Assistant Secretary, Julie Myers, and the federal agency that raids in homes and businesses are terrorizing immigrant communities and families. Add to that the numerous reports of deaths in detention, limited or non-existent access to basic health care and prescribed medications, and the hodge-podge of for-profit and government run state and local prisons to which ICE detainees are assigned, and the fear of ICE is palpable in neighborhoods across the county. But even as we escalate police-state tactics, the majority of immigrants are not going to give up on their American Dream, nor the dreams they gave to their children. The majority of the undocumented have been here for years, have careers, friends, mortgages, and children -often U.S. citizens - that bind them to their American communities."

### **Senator Hillary Clinton & Representative Mike Honda Announce Legislation to Assist Immigrant Families**

The bill "Strengthening Communities through Education and Integration Act of 2008" (H.R. 6617), introduced on July 24th, would create additional funding for English Language Learners in adult and youth education by increasing the authorization for Even Start Family Literacy programs and providing incentives for employers to offer adult education and ESL programs to their employees, among other things.

According to GovTrack, this bill is in the first step in the legislative process. Introduced bills go first to committees that deliberate, investigate, and revise them before they are up for general debate in Congress. For more information visit the website of Representative Mike Honda at <http://honda.house.gov/>