



The present debate about illegal immigration

Ana Colton-Sonnenberg

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Seminar paper from the year 2008 in the subject American Studies - Culture and Applied Geography, grade: 1,0, University of Paderborn (Institut für Anglistik und Amerikanistik), course: From melting pot to quilt: The immigration issue in the american studies-classroom, 33 entries in the bibliography, language: English, abstract: As former U.S. President John F. Kennedy indicates in his posthumously published and recently re-edited essay A Nation of Immigrants, all citizens of the United States are immigrants or descendants of immigrants. Therefore, according to the author, immigration policy should suit their needs in order to ensure the well-being of a country which depends on “the contribution of immigrants [...] in every aspect of [its] national life.” However, with 37.4 million foreign-born residents in the United States in 2006, of which 9.1 million have obtained legal permanent resident status since 1997 (1,266,264 in 2006 only) and an estimated 11.6 million are unauthorized migrants, immigration has become a highly controversial subject. Fuelled by the 9/11 attacks and a growing xenophobia in the United States, protest against legal and illegal immigration is increasing, forcing politicians to take action. Although the U.S. economy depends largely on immigrant labour, immigration policy is becoming tougher than ever.

This paper deals with the latest legal efforts to control illegal immigration: the 2005 Border Protection, Anti-terrorism, and Illegal Immigration Control Act, House of Representatives Bill 4437 and the 2006 Comprehensive Immigration Reform Act, Senate Bill 2611 and the reactions they caused among Americans. In order to illustrate the momentousness of the current debate about unauthorized migration, I will start with an overview of the most important facts and figures including a definition of the notion ‘illegal/ unauthorized (im)migrant’, the countries of origin and distribution of illegal immigrants and their impact on the U.S. economy. This will be followed by a discussion of the H.R.4437 and S.2611 bills and the conclusion to this paper.

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