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2026 Guest Editor: Professor Christian Bolden, Ph.D.

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JSRI News

JustSouth Monthly Podcast: Immigrant Workers' Critical Role in Rebuilding after Hurricane Katrina and Present Realities. Hosted by Loyola Senior Si Starks, Sue Weishar discusses the important role that immigrant workers had in the recovery and rebuilding efforts in the wake of Hurricane Katrina. She shares numerous anecdotes from survivors who interacted with immigrants as well as directly from those that helped with recovery efforts. Sue also discusses the contemporary state of immigration enforcement in the wake of the second Trump presidency. [Listen here!](#)

Upcoming Events

In the Community

Activating People Power. Join the Power Coalition, The Juror Project, and VOTE for a community gathering focused on activating and uplifting people power, discussing reasons for why you should vote and the

Immigrants Belong Here.

By Dr. Pablo Zavala

Hispanic and Latin American immigrants came in large numbers to help rebuild New Orleans after Hurricane Katrina in 2005. Nearly half of the rebuilding workforce was Latinx, and about 54% were undocumented¹. In response to the natural disaster, the government “welcomed” workers by suspending the Davis-Bacon Act, which would have required federal contractors to pay them no less than the locally prevailing wages, and waived sanctions against employers for hiring undocumented workers. Authorities also eased labor regulations and did not monitor construction sites.

The result was that immigrant workers often lacked housing assistance, functioning schools, adequate pay, safety equipment, healthcare, and food security^{2, 3, 4, 5}. To add insult to injury, some in the media and elected officials cast discriminatory remarks; Mayor Ray Nagin expressed a fear that the city would be “overrun by Mexican workers”⁶.

Acknowledging this history is crucial; today’s anti-immigrant rhetoric is a cruel reward for the families who rebuilt New Orleans.

For example, Governor Landry officially teamed up with President Trump and ICE to target “dangerous, illegal criminals,” according to Operation Geaux’s official announcement in 2025⁷. Most of the Hispanic population in the Greater New Orleans lives in Jefferson Parish, where Kenner is located. The Kenner Police Department joined the 287(g) program in 2025, which gives law enforcement officers authority to access immigration databases and alert federal agents when they’ve detained undocumented civilians.

According to the [American Immigration Council](#)⁸, 287(g) agreements result in widespread racial profiling and arrests of civilians with minor criminal histories, can be costly for local governments, do not provide police with adequate training, and endanger community safety. **Instead, welcoming immigrants actually does not increase crime, and can even improve public safety.**

Panelists include Norris Henderson (VOTE) & Will Snowden (Juror Project, and Loyola Law School Professor). [Saturday, September 5th from 11 A.M.–1 P.M. at St. Joseph The Worker Catholic Church at 455 Ames Blvd, Marrero, 70072. See the flyer here.](#)

Opportunities

First Grace Community Alliance is hiring a Bilingual Operations Coordinator.

FGCA's mission is to work with and for people in need, especially women and children, by meeting food, housing, and other emergency needs, while simultaneously challenging systemic poverty in the greater New Orleans Area. Their two main programs are Hagar's House and Project Ishmael. [Read more here.](#)

Orleans Public Defenders is hiring for their Social Work Internship, Investigator Internship, Client Advocate Internship, and accepting Post Law School, Undergraduate or Graduate Degree Fellowship Proposals. OPD represent nearly 20,000 people each year utilizing a client-centered, community-oriented defense model that puts the client first. [Read more about these opportunities here.](#)

What We're Reading

"How Father Twomey got sugar-cane workers out of slave quarters." [Read this article](#) by Dawn Eden Goldstein about the 1967 initiative that presaged Habitat for Humanity.

"Louisiana judge holds ICE official in contempt." [Read this article](#) by Delaney Nolan, *The Lens*, about the first time an individual ICE official in a leadership position has been cited in contempt of court.



Monument unveiled in Crescent Park in the Bywater in 2018, sculpted by Italian American Franco Alessandrini, and commissioned by the Juan Jorge Gershanik family. Inscription reads: "This monument is a tribute to the Latin American workers who helped to rebuild the City of New Orleans in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, August 29th, 2005."

That study also concluded that documented and undocumented immigrants are less likely to commit crimes than their U.S.-born counterparts at the national, state, county, and neighborhood levels, for both violent and non-violent crimes.

Research demonstrates that immigrants heavily contribute to the economy. In 2022 alone, undocumented immigrants paid nearly \$100 billion in federal, state, and local tax revenue, although those taxpayers are often left out of the programs their taxes fund, according to the [Institute on Taxation and Economic Policy](#)⁹. In Louisiana alone, undocumented immigrants paid \$181 million in taxes, and most of that in the form of sales taxes (\$29.4 million was in property taxes and about \$31 million was in business and income taxes). Naturally, undocumented immigrants would contribute more economically if they had access to work authorization.

Regardless of their numerous contributions, immigrants deserve a life free of fear because everyone deserves dignity.

During the Spring 2026 semester, as part of my JSRI Affiliate Fellowship, in conjunction with my Immigration on Film course, we held a speaker series on Fridays open to the Loyola community. Guests spoke about immigration and the good work they're doing. The following local non-profit immigration

"Who is ICE arresting in Louisiana, and where?" [Read this article](#) by Delaney Nolan, *The Lens*, about how arrests reached record highs in July, including an increase in people with no criminal history and in people apprehended through 287(g) agreements.

(ISLA), Project Ishmael, Southeast Dignity Not Detention (SEDND), Luke's House Clinic, Home is Here, The New Neighbor Project, Unión Migrante, as well as Professors Isabel Medina, J.D., and Hiroko Kusuda, J.D., from Loyola's Law School.

Here are some facts we learned:

- Louisiana is one of the largest hubs in the country for immigration detention
- There are 11 detention centers, most of them for-profit (e.g., GEO Group and LaSalle Corrections)
- Most of these detention centers are in rural areas by design, far away from lawyers, families, media, and public oversight
- Winn Correctional Center in Louisiana is one of the biggest in the country with 1,500 detainees
- Louisiana State Penitentiary Angola opened an ICE detention center in Camp 57; [DHS used propaganda and dehumanizing language](#), calling immigrants housed here "the worst of the worst criminal illegal aliens"
- Unlike criminal law, the immigration system does not guarantee legal counsel, leaving children, the working-class, and non-English speakers at a disadvantage
- DHS, including ICE, was created in 2003 in light of 9/11
- ICE kills extrajudicially:
- agents have killed four civilians so far in 2026: Renee Good, Alex Pretti, Lorenzo Salgado Araujo, and Joan Sebastian Guerrero
- From January 20, 2025, to June 4, 2026, 52 people died in ICE custody
- The Big Beautiful Bill gave federal agencies a historic \$170 billion for anti-immigration enforcement, detention, and deportation

What can we do?

- vote (election day is November 3rd; you can [check your voter registration here](#))
- volunteer with a non-profit organization
- follow them on social media
- volunteer to deliver food to vulnerable families
- call senators and representatives at the federal, state, and local level
- attend a protest
- attend one of Unión Migrante's many workshops ...including Ojos, which is a large network of New Orleanians who are on the lookout for ICE (Ojos has been covered nationally, e.g., [Mother Jones](#) and [Harper's Magazine](#))
- abolish ICE

Immigrants belong here and deserve a life full of dignity, respect, and joy.

Dr. Pablo Zavala teaches Spanish language and Latin American studies courses at Loyola University New Orleans, where he also directs the Latin American Studies program. His book is called [Forging a Mexican People: Collective Subjectivities in Postrevolutionary Print Culture, 1917-1968](#) (University of Arizona Press, 2026). Born in Mexico, Dr. Zavala is a first-generation scholar from a working-class background.

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Monthly articles reflect the opinions of the authors and not necessarily those of Loyola University New Orleans.

Please send feedback to jsri@loyno.edu.

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