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June 18, 2010

Friday, June 18, 2010

6/16/2010 6:01:00 PM Immigrant Somerville teens open photo exhibit in State House

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By George P. Hassett

Two weeks after Massachusetts senators passed a far-reaching crackdown on illegal immigrants, a group of Somerville immigrant teenagers opened their photography exhibit at the State House.



Dimas Avila stands in front of his art work, part of an exhibition at the State House by the teenage artists of Centro Presente, an immigrant advocacy group in Somerville.

The teens, working with the immigrant advocacy group Centro Presente, took pictures of their everyday life in Somerville - lower Broadway barber shops, stores, landmarks, Mr. Quintanilla, "one of the few Latino teachers at Somerville High" - to add a face to the simmering immigration debate.

The exhibit is on display through Friday.

"We want to show people that we can contribute to the future of Massachusetts," said Dimas Avila, who graduated from Somerville High School last week.



-Photos by George P. Hassett

The photo exhibit is the latest pro-immigrant measure to come out of Somerville, where 30 percent of residents were born in a different country and ethnic restaurants are a staple of the local economy.

"[Immigrants] don't get harassed in Somerville," said Juan Carlos Acosta, an eighth grader at Winter Hill Community School with a photo in the State House exhibit.

"We're accepted in Somerville," said Avila. "Somerville is a tight community and it's very diverse, there's more understanding that we are here to work hard and achieve our dreams."

State Rep. Denise Provost, D-Somerville, gave opening remarks in English with a few phrases in Spanish and state Sen. Pat Jehlen, D-Somerville, welcomed the young artists - some of whom are undocumented after entering the country illegally with their parents - into a building where tough new laws were passed in May cracking down on illegal immigrants.

The new regulations, passed as an amendment to the state budget, would bar the state from doing business with any company found to break federal laws against illegal immigrant hiring. It would also toughen penalties for creating or using fake identification documents, and explicitly deny in-state college tuition for illegal immigrants.

On their way into the State House today, the teens passed a lone protester holding a sign that read, "Arizona had the right idea," referencing Arizona's new immigration law, the strictest in the nation.

The protester, Joe O'Malley, said, "I'm not anti-immigrant. I'm anti-illegal immigrant. We're laying off teachers, cops and firefighters while offering benefits to people who came here illegally."

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Calendar for June 2010 showing dates 1 through 30.

Weather forecast for Somerville, MA: At 8:54 AM EDT, Clear, 75°F, NW 12 MPH.

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Reader Comments

Posted: Thursday, June 17, 2010

Article comment by: **Kate**

It's a tough situation, for children of illegal immigrants. They had no choice about being brought here or born here. They want to show that they have positive things to offer, to our city/state. It's better to educate these children, thereby turning them into productive members of society, than what the alternative would create. It's a difficult situation, without any clear-cut answers.

Regarding welfare benefits - A friend of mine used to work for the Department of Welfare, in 1993, and he told me that "we don't reciprocate with Immigration". So a blind eye has been turned to this, for a long.

Posted: Wednesday, June 16, 2010

Article comment by: **Deece**

Joe O'Malley has it right. This is not about being anti-immigrant....it's about our opposition to illegal aliens.

Based on the recent WHDH / Suffolk University poll, it sounds like 84 percent of Massachusetts voters are also sick and tired of paying for illegals and believe applicants should be required to prove their status before receiving state benefits.

If you're among the 84 percent and are fed up with our elected officials taking from you and your family to give to illegal aliens, please take a moment to view and sign the petition we are sponsoring to be presented to our governor and state legislators, opposing the "New Americans Agenda" and the damaging impact it threatens to have on the legal, taxpaying citizens of Massachusetts.

<http://www.gopetition.com/online/32890.html>

Posted: Wednesday, June 16, 2010

Article comment by: **Bill Press**

Huh "some of whom are undocumented after entering the country illegally with their ...", so these criminals are here illegally and we're to celebrate Who is paying to educate them, provide them health insurance, rent subsidies,etc? US. Get them out.

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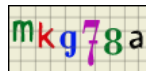
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