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## How the Lowest-Paid Workers Get Ripped Off

**A new study shows that low-wage workers are being deprived of dollars they've earned**

By [LIZ WOLGEMUTH](#)  
Posted: September 3, 2009

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In the existing [labor market](#), employers who hire illegal immigrants benefit from an unnatural balance of power, since undocumented workers have little leverage with employers who violate the regulations of the formal labor market, says Will Wilkinson of the Cato Institute. He believes there needs to be much greater integration in the labor market in North America and policies that give undocumented immigrants the status to live and work here.

[See [America's 30 Best Careers for 2009](#).]

According to the *New York Times*, Labor Secretary Hilda Solis said her department was hiring 250 additional wage-and-hour inspectors. But greater enforcement of the existing workplace standards could complicate the route to employment for many illegal immigrants because they often rely on jobs that are below [minimum wage](#) as entry points in the U.S. job market and use those jobs to gain the skills to reach higher pay levels, Wilkinson says.

Milkman tells of interviewing a hotel worker whose supervisor would enter hotel rooms before her and take the tips that had been left for her. The worker also was required to [work](#) more hours than she was paid for. When she complained, she was essentially fired—told her services were no longer needed.

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#### unskilled labor

Im sorry but I don't think the answer is to make it easier for "undocumented" ie.. illegal workers to get paid more. I think that americans who were born here and pay taxes here should be hired for those jobs. A case in point is my husband. An american, was laid off along with other american workers and replaced by workers contracted from russia. The reason for the lay off was "we need to cut labor costs." Yet his boss hired six Russian workers to replace Two americans to get a tax break from the federal govt. of \$125,000 per worker. The russian workers are paid at least \$3.00 an hour more and work 56 more hours a week. How is that cutting labor costs? The same employer fired me because I got kicked by a cow( The employer is a dairy farm) and later got pregnant. And refused to pay for the surgury necessary to fix the injury.

While I believe that people ought to be paid for the work they do and know their rights, I do not believe that illegal immigrants should be entitled to anything. Including a job. Minimum wage or not. The only think they are entitled to in my opinion is a one way ticket back to their own country until they can learn how to be compliant with our laws.

They dont pay taxes and contribute nothing to our society. A society that gives them everything from food to shelter to help paying their bills. While people like my husband and I are told that we make too much money to qualify for any kind of help. We are expected for a family of four to live on \$368.00 a week before taxes. Yet immigrants qualify for all of the "help" programs because they are uneducated or unskilled.

The answer isnt to give more jobs and equality to immigrants the answer is America needs to take care of Americans first.

**Kk of WI @ Sep 08, 2009 03:28:59 AM**

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#### It's not just the unskilled laborers....

In this economy, you take what you can get. Case in point: I have one graduate degree, a graduate certificate of study in college teaching, and two four-year degrees. Because jobs are so few and hard to get now, I accepted employment as an elementary teacher in a Montessori school.

Contracted hours: 35/week.

Hourly wage: below industry standard

Benefits: none

Paid prep time: 0 (last year I put in 20-40 hours a week -- no exaggeration!)

Overtime: not authorized. The weeks when I exceeded 40 paid hours, I was paid at my normal rate. With this employer, squeaky wheels get their hours reduced, and I can't afford that.

However, as unemployment rates continue rising, I have a job that partially supports my family and my bills are paid on time. Meanwhile, I keep looking for more suitable employment.

I'm sure there are many others in a similar fix.

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