“The economic gulf between the world’s haves and have-nots continues to widen. There is widespread dissatisfaction with existing structures and a burning desire for democracy, human rights and self-determination. The powerful, however, have little interest in the redistribution of wealth, either within or among countries.” --Scenario #1, circa 2010-2015, Scenario Planning Project sponsored by the International Catholic Migration Commission, Geneva, January, 2000

The Global Context

I. What Immigrants in Santa Clara County Say

A critical component of understanding the needs, contributions, and life conditions of immigrants in Santa Clara County is understanding the reasons they left their home countries and why they came to this valley. Therefore, as part of conducting an inquiry into the global context, we also asked these questions to immigrants directly. The information we compiled comes from the following sources:

1. The random sample of the top five immigrant groups in Santa Clara County
2. The random sample of the top 16 immigrant countries that receive any public assistance in Santa Clara County
3. Discussions from immigrants participating in Immigrants Building Community
4. A short questionnaire conducted in community college ESL classes
5. An in-depth focus group with local immigrant leaders from 11 different nations

Random Sample of Top Five Immigrant Groups

When asked about six key elements relating to the conditions in their home countries, including the issue of family separation, respondents replied that economic and political conditions were the key reasons they left their countries, closely followed by the desire for family reunification.

Top Six Reasons Why Immigrants Leave Their Countries
(Random Sample)
A high percentage of respondents answered that they wanted to come to the United States to improve their educational opportunities, while a low percentage (only 5.6%) stated that a main reason to immigrate was to receive benefits in the United States.

In a separate question, respondents were asked if they thought immigrants come to the U.S. “mostly to receive benefits”. While 7% of immigrants answered affirmatively, over five times that number (37%) of the US-born answered affirmatively.

Ninety four percent (94%) of immigrants also stated that the quality of life is better in the United States than in their home countries, with percentages above 90% for all five countries.

Three out of four of the top five immigrant groups in the county (75.9%) said they are happier in the United States than in their home countries. Seven out of 10 Mexicans indicated that they were happy in the U.S., but they also provided the highest percentage of the top five immigrant groups who were less happy being in this country than in their home country (at 30.2%). The percentages of Chinese (28.6%) and Indian (27%) respondents who are less happy in this country were close behind. Filipinos stood at 17.4%. The happiest of all were the Vietnamese: 90.3% were happier here than there and only 9.7% were happier in Vietnam. These percentages must be understood in the economic, historical, and social contexts of each country. These are relative comparisons; many Vietnamese indicated stress, sadness, and fear, for example, when asked about their emotional state in the United States.

**Sample of Immigrant Public Assistance Recipients**

Of the six key elements in the previous chart, the most important reasons and their percentages that immigrants receiving public benefits mentioned for leaving their countries were:

1. Reuniting with family members (48%), especially Chinese, Korean, Filipino, Indian, Russian, Taiwanese and Iranian respondents, all 50% or above
2. Economic problems (35%), especially Mexican (83%), Salvadoran (54%) and Filipino (53%) respondents
3. Political problems (33%), especially for respondents from nations with a high number of refugees or asylees such as Nicaragua and Laos (above 80%), Vietnam and Ethiopia (above 70%), and Somalia, Cambodia and El Salvador (above 60%)
4. War in their homeland (17%), mentioned especially by Bosnians and Cambodians (both over 90%) and Nicaraguans, Somalis, Laotians and Salvadorans (over 75%)
5. Religious problems (9%), especially Russians (29%), Iranians (28%) and Bosnians (19%)
6. Ethnic or racial problems (7%), especially Russians (48%), Bosnians (37%) and Somalis (38%)
Once again, a high percentage of public assistance recipients answered that one reason they wanted to come to the United States was to improve their educational opportunities, although it was not as high a percentage as those immigrants not receiving public assistance. An even lower percentage of those receiving public assistance answered that one of the main reasons they came to the U.S. was to receive benefits in the U.S. (3.8%) than those immigrants not receiving public benefits (5.6%, above).

In the separate question asking immigrants if they think immigrants enter the U.S. mostly to receive benefits, 7.6% of immigrant public assistance recipients answered yes while 45.3% of US-born public assistance recipients answered yes. Thus the US-born are more than six times as likely to believe that immigrants enter the U.S. to receive benefits as immigrants, of those receiving public assistance.

Over 90% of immigrants in these top 16 immigrant groups in the county who receive public assistance stated they have a better quality of life in the United States than in their home countries. The only significant exceptions were Koreans and Somalis, immigrant groups where 33% and 27% of the respondents felt the quality of life was better in their homelands, respectively. Similarly, four out of five immigrants in the county who are receiving public assistance were happier in the United States than in their home nations. The big exception was Bosnians: 3 out of 5 said they were happier in their homeland than they are in the United States.

Participants in Immigrants Building Community

When asked why immigrants leave their countries,  
- Iranians emphasized the change in government in Iran leading to political and religious problems that endanger individual lives. Especially women feel the social pressures of having a strict religious government. Improved educational and economic opportunities were also mentioned.  
- Vietnamese highlighted family reunification and the better opportunity of education for their children.  
- Latino immigrants stated they leave their countries to work, and secondarily for a better life and improved opportunities.

When asked why they come to Santa Clara County,  
- Iranians stated they come here to join family members, to live in a good climate, and to be in an area where there is cultural diversity, tolerance, and inter-ethnic friendship and harmony.  
- Vietnamese said that they come here because their relatives are here and because there is already an established Vietnamese community here.  
- Latino participants emphasized that they come here mostly because they have family and friends here already.
Questionnaire in Community College ESL Classes

In a survey of ESL students at San Jose City College, 68 students completed a simple 8-question survey. One-third of the students (23) were from Vietnam, one-sixth of the students (11) were from Mexico, and one-half of the students (34) were from 20 other countries. Ages ranged from 17 to 59, with a mean age of 30. 39% of the respondents were male and 61% were female. They had lived in the United States an average of 5 years.

Exactly 60% stated they felt they had to leave their home countries; 40% said they did not have to leave their countries.

Providing as many reasons as they wished as to why these students left their countries, the top answers were the following:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Top Reasons ESL Students Left Their Homelands</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Educational Opportunities for Self and/or Family</td>
<td>42.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political Problems in My Country</td>
<td>35.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family Reason/Reunification</td>
<td>22.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employment Opportunities for Self and/or Family</td>
<td>19.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Better Future or Life for Self and/or Family</td>
<td>14.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Better Economy</td>
<td>11.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethnic/Religious Purposes</td>
<td>5.9%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

When asked why they came “to Santa Clara County and not another location”, these were the results:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Top Reasons ESL Students Came to Santa Clara County</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Family</td>
<td>82.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>45.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jobs</td>
<td>39.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Climate</td>
<td>29.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Culturally Comfortable/Culturally Competent County</td>
<td>26.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business</td>
<td>13.2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Eighty-four percent (84%) of the respondents indicated that they are satisfied that they came to Santa Clara County, mostly because of career and educational opportunities, the existence of a pre-settled community, and the climate, in that order. The other 16% stated that they are not satisfied that they came to Santa Clara County, overwhelmingly because of the high cost of living.
Focus Group of Immigrant Community Leaders

A focus group was conducted at the Office of Human Relations on May 29, 2000 with immigrant community leaders from the following 11 countries: Cambodia, El Salvador, Ethiopia, Former Yugoslavia, India, Iran, Mexico, People’s Republic of China, Russian, Somalia, and Vietnam. These community leaders included executive directors, program managers, and officers of community-based organizations serving immigrants. A full edited script is located in the appendix.

The three questions asked of these community leaders clearly pointed out the purposes of the focus group:

1. Why do people leave your country?
2. Why do they come to the United States?
3. Why do they come to Santa Clara County?

These three questions led to a deep and lively discussion the highlights of which have now been memorialized in a short video. All participants were aware that they were being videotaped and signed authorization forms that the content could be used for the purposes of presenting the above topics.

1. “Why Immigrants Leave My Country”

The focus group participants provided rich discussion and many reasons why people abandon their homelands. Ultimately, the primary reason cited for immigrants leaving their countries was economic inequality. This became the dominating cause once the reasons for civil war were more fully discussed and dissected. Most were of the opinion that civil wars do not arise from nowhere: the drive for profit, cheap labor, natural resources, and markets around the world especially by United States corporations, the drive to fund the arms industry, and superpower/corporate geopolitical control of natural resources were all mentioned as underlying causes for divisive religious, ethnic, and political events expertly manipulated by politicians.

2. “Why Immigrants Come to the United States”

Participants pointed out that there are voluntary and involuntary immigrants that come to the United States, but the vast majority is involuntary in the sense that they are leaving economic, political, or religious conditions beyond their control. Focus group participants emphasized common themes like the desire to have better lives, improved economic, career, and educational opportunities for themselves and especially for their children, the need for a safe haven following civil war, democracy and the freedoms of speech and press, “the beauty of choices” in so many areas, and the need for economic survival. In terms of international refugee law, the ability of refugees to reunite with
family members after arriving in the United States was seen as one favorable reason that refugees prefer the United States over European nations.

Participants then provided differences in their answers based upon the particularities of conditions in their home countries. For example, Indians are attracted by the hi-tech boom. Cambodians came simply as part of a quota system, arriving in any country that would take them. Many Somalis, Iranians, and Salvadoran immigrants came first as students and then had large numbers of refugees enter the country after bloody civil wars. Russian Jews have a longstanding relationship with the American Jewish community, and “feel free to move around the country” unlike in the old USSR. Vietnamese have special ties developed with the US from the War in Vietnam, including the feeling that the US will do more than other countries to overthrow the current Vietnamese government. Mexicans have cultural and geographic affinity with the United States because of a common border and the fact that California and other states once belonged to Mexico. Salvadorans continue to immigrate in part because poor Salvadorans in their home countries see the remittances some Salvadorans receive and think the streets are paved of gold in the United States.

This latter theme was agreed upon by everyone: the public relations job the United States does around the world was felt to be amazing. Images from Hollywood movies, the words to songs sung in Ethiopia about the United States, and other aspects painting a picture of “easier work and easier money” abound throughout the world. The reality, shared by the many participants who discussed this topic, is that work is hard in the United States, there are glass ceilings and discrimination, many laws and initiatives are harming minorities and immigrants, a safety net has been shredded (especially compared to the European nations), the gap between the haves and have-nots grows inside the United States as well as outside, etc.

3. “Why Immigrants Come to Santa Clara County”

The reasons immigrants come to Santa Clara County are fascinating. The first broad set of reasons is similar to the reasons immigrants come to the United States. This includes democracy, opportunity, security, and importantly, that they already have family members living here.

However, Santa Clara County has some unique characteristics that attract immigrants:

- The milieu of innovation in Silicon Valley, unlike any concentration of innovation in the world, attracts immigrants with computer, science, and technology backgrounds (especially those from India, China, and Taiwan)
- The low unemployment rate attracts immigrants from both ends of the valley’s hourglass economy, especially Chinese and Salvadorans who first settled in San Francisco and now have migrated south
- Pre-established immigrant communities provide a huge base of cultural comfort and community support
• The climate is similar to that of Southeast Asian countries, especially in that it doesn’t snow in Santa Clara County
• The tolerance and acceptance of diversity was seen as a very significant attraction to living in Santa Clara County. Examples include:
  1. “If I take as an example Somali women and the way they dress, when they dress the Somali way say in Alabama or places like that, they automatically are stared at and they feel like an outsider. But when they come here and they see there is such huge diversity in the population, they feel comfortable.”
  2. Immigrant groups on the opposite sides of international disputes who are now living in peaceful coexistence in the same apartment complex.
• The celebration of poly-cultural diversity (not just tolerance toward diversity) was also seen in a very positive light, including the role of the County in caring enough to convene the summit on immigrant needs
• The acceptance and even integration of many religious traditions is seen as very favorable
• Great culinary traditions that all immigrant groups enjoy provide a plus
• Good schools and geographic proximity to Stanford and UC-Berkeley are seen as positive for immigrant families with high-achieving children

These favorable characteristics were somewhat dampened by the negative conditions that are now fully developed in Santa Clara County: the high cost of living, the astronomical cost of housing, traffic delays, the decline of quality of life, etc. Focus groups participants reported that the cost of living is so high that many poor immigrants are leaving, Santa Clara County is no longer being recommended as a resettlement area, and in the future not many new immigrants will have the opportunity to live, work, and create understanding together.

II. Globalization and Increasing Global Inequality

Entire treatises have been written on the structure of the global economy, the growing impoverishment and disempowerment of the vast majority of people in Third World countries, structural adjustment requirements of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) that create insuperable dependency in the current paradigm, and the role of Communist-led governments in positing an alternative to globalization while also imposing limits on their citizens. In understanding the global context for immigration to Santa Clara County, our goal cannot be to develop these themes.

Nevertheless, in our effort to better understand why immigrants have come to Santa Clara County, the conditions of life they bring with them, and what the future portends for immigration to the United States and Santa Clara County, we must look at major global trends that are shaping migration patterns and trends. As the random sample of immigrants and the focus group of community leaders from eleven different nations showed, there are political, ethnic, and religious reasons for international migration to Santa Clara County, but the underlying core issue is the state of the world economy.
Currently all major trends of the world economy indicate that the bases for increased immigration from Third World countries to the United States will continue to grow. Conditions evident in the world economy push international migrants out of their nations and conditions of higher consumption and more open democracy pull them toward First World countries, the United States, and Santa Clara County.

What are these key global trends, based on sound evidence, that assure continued immigration to the United States and Santa Clara County?

**Trend One: Globalization has led to the destruction of traditional lifestyles, local and traditional ways of making a living, and local environments.**

Today 130,000,000 people live outside their country of origin, according to United Nations figures. Hundreds of millions more have been displaced inside their countries. In the drive to control natural resources, exploit markets and workers, and produce the greatest economic returns, local residents are treated like pawns on a chessboard. Tactical coercion is part of the formula. This was mentioned frequently by the focus group participants from 11 countries represented in Santa Clara County. According to Patrick Taran, Director of the International Migrant Rights Watch Committee, “Political and military forces often use ethnicity and religion to divide, even destroy, pluralistic societies, and displace people. By one recent account, there were 130 active armed conflicts around the world. Migration today is less about seeking a better life; it is more about having life at all, simply seeking survival.”

It is the lack of economic and political opportunity in third world nations that produces forced immigration, and the causes of this lack of opportunity are directly linked to US corporate and political control of local resources and options, according to David Korten, Stanford Ph.D. and author of *When Corporations Rule the World*. Korten, who worked for the Agency for International Development and in international development for over 30 years around the world, contends that US corporate control of land, resources, money supply, wage structures, interest rates, terms of trade, and even direct handouts of “foreign aid” all create a structure of control and dependency that do not allow true local development. Peppered with dozens of examples of how local environments have been ruined or subjugated, “integrated into the world economy”, Korten makes this conclusion. Until local people have local control over local resources and local decision-making, there can be no true local economic or social development or democracy. These conditions of local control keep people in their home countries and undercut international migration.

Pramila Jayapal is a former international loan director who also worked in international development across Asia and Africa. In her recent book entitled *Pilgrimage: One Woman’s Return to a Changing India*, she concludes that the path of high technology is no easy fix for poverty. “As globalization and modernization clash with traditional
ways of living, we are seeing an enormous migration from rural areas to cities.” Many young people head to the cities, finding it “difficult to find lives that will sustain them, and often end up living in slum areas without the benefit of old family structures”. A January 2000 study from the non-profit Society for Integrated Development of the Himalayas found that all Indian parents agreed, “The current system alienates children from their beliefs and leads to indifference toward land, family and customs”. Meantime, after six decades of independence from the old colonialism, “the literacy rate remains at 52 percent, and the percentage of the gross national product spent on education is a minuscule 3.3 percent”.

Free trade policies have had a huge impact on the displacement of local residents. At the national convention of the American Immigration Lawyer’s Association (AILA) in Chicago in June 2000, Susan Gzesh explained that Mexican campesinos (farmers), the largest employment sector of Mexico today, will no longer have an incentive to produce the historical staple crop of Mexico, corn. Under the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), U.S. corn is cheaper than Mexican corn. “One-half of all Mexican farmers will be displaced in the next 15 years. This creates huge push factors created by NAFTA.”

Francisco Alba, a professor at the prestigious Colegio de Mexico in Mexico City estimates the unemployment and underemployment rate in Mexico now at 25-35%. Forty percent of Mexican households live on less than $220 per month (the equivalent of two minimum wage salaries). With small investments in education, 31% of the Mexican population over age 15 has less than six years of schooling. Income disparity continues to widen in Mexico.

As Governor George W. Bush acknowledged in August 2000, Mexicans come to the United States “because it’s much easier to make a living here. Moms and dads are coming here to feed their children.”

Similarly, under a 1994 global trade agreement, South Korea ended its longstanding ban on importing rice, the national staple. Rice is the main source of income for 6 million Korean farmers, who stand to be displaced.

**Trend Two: The global economy permits capital to cross international borders at will, but places greater restrictions on the ability of workers to cross borders.**

While capital and commodities via free trade are moving across borders with accelerating rapidity, low-income and poverty-stricken workers cannot do the same. Markets and profitability increase, but conditions deteriorate for most workers in the world, who remain immobilized in their home countries, frozen into deteriorating conditions, or displaced into precarious conditions in other countries.
**Trend Three:** Migrant workers, whether in the US, in free trade zones, or in the maquiladora regions, are some of the most exploited workers in the world, and lack labor protections.

When international migrants are employed in the United States, when local workers find employment in free trade zones such as the San Bartolo Free Trade Zone in San Salvador, or when internally displaced persons (IDPs) such as Mexicans from the states of Michoacan or Oaxaca work in maquiladoras on the US-Mexican border, they receive low wages with few or no benefits. Every effort is made to prevent unionization in most of these instances, and workplace violations of health and safety are commonplace. As Carlos Avitia from Mexico stated in the focus group, why would anyone being paid by a U.S. company in Mexico at a rate of $.50 or $.70 per hour not want to step across the border and earn $5, $6, $7, or $10 an hour? Even though the latter are barely survival wages in most of the United States and definitely in Santa Clara County, they are exorbitant wages for Mexicans. Mexican farmworkers have a saying: “What’s worse than being exploited in Fresno? Not being exploited in Fresno.”

Hi-tech professional temporary immigrant workers in Silicon Valley are the exception, rather than the rule, and they are still contingent labor with far fewer options than U.S. citizens or permanent residents. The reality is, in the year 2000 the richest 2.7 million Americans, making up the top 1 percent, has as many after-tax dollars to spend as the bottom 100 million people combined. Immigrants are disproportionately located in that 100 million.

**Trend Four:** “Rising debt and skyrocketing national budget deficits have produced fiscal crises in many countries. International financial institutions loan money to these governments, but only if they implement ‘structural adjustment programs’. These programs often impose harsh conditions which undermine social services, decent wages, and job opportunities—compelling people to migrate.” Patrick Taran, Director of the International Migrant Rights Watch Committee

Doug Bandow, a senior fellow at the Cato Institute, wrote in April 2000 in Fortune magazine that

[T]he Chamber of Commerce, the National Association of Manufacturers, and big exporters like Boeing are lobbying Congress to approve roughly $18 billion in funding for the International Monetary Fund (IMF)—a backdoor method of seeding foreign economies with money to buy U.S. goods. Congress should say no. The IMF has long
impeded economic growth in poorer countries, and its new penchant for bailouts is likely to further slow reform while putting U.S. taxpayers at risk.

The real test of any aid agency is whether its clients move from dependency to self-sufficiency. Bryan Johnson and Brett Schaefer of the Heritage Foundation figure that in the end, more than half of the IMF’s borrowers between 1965 and 1995 were no better off than when they started. A third were actually poorer. Almost all were deeper in debt. Eighty-four countries have been borrowing from the fund for at least a decade.

Nor do the IMF’s loans aid the reform process: In the short term, the money cycles back to private creditors; in the longer run, fund programs subsidize inefficient and corrupt political systems.

Abundant literature exists on the impacts of structural adjustment programs on local inhabitants. From raising the prices of mass transit and food to lowering budgets for health and education, the need to repay interest on foreign debt consumes an ever-higher percentage of the GNP of many countries. In Nicaragua it surpasses 40%. Be it Indonesia, South Korea, Honduras, Russia, or Mexico, local national politicians and not local people have been the primary beneficiaries of IMF loans, in addition to international banks, arms sellers, and other corporations that sell to these 84 governments.

A 1997 U.N. development program study found that if the money spent by Third World nations on debt interest payments were instead invested in education and health, more than 7 million children could be saved every year. The amount now spent on debt service far outpaces such social spending.

**Trend Five: The gap between life expectations and aspirations, fueled by the ideology of consumption and the sales effort, provides a strong motive for immigrants to abandon their countries.**

The consumerist ideology—that what we are is defined by what and how much we consume—is strongly purveyed around the world. The global context focus group attested to this fact. As authors Alejandro Portes and Ruben B. Rumbaut state in the introduction to their recent book Immigrant America: A Portrait,

The United States and the other industrialized countries play a double role in this process. First, they are the source of much of the modern culture of consumption and of the new expectations diffused worldwide. Second, the same process of global diffusion has taught an increasing number of people about economic opportunities in the developed world that are absent in their own countries.

Not only does international marketing provide a strong basis for immigrating to the United States, but it also provides a strong basis for internal migration to the world’s
largest and poorest cities inside Third World nations. Pramila Jayapal, the author of the recent book on India mentioned above, states that many children from rural India “head to urban areas, shunning their village roots for visions blasted over billboards and television advertisements”.

**Trend Six:** The “peace dividend” and the “productivity dividend” have not been utilized effectively to provide dividends for average working people.

This is particularly true for the world’s most needy residents, but it is also true even for workers in the United States. As Alan Greenspan stated in a speech at Boston College in a Conference on the New Economy on March 6, 2000, “At some point...wage increases must rise above even impressive gains in productivity.”

This has not happened. With the end of the Cold War and the rising productivity rate in the United States (2.8% per year from 1995-1999, as opposed to half that rate from 1973-1994), many prognosticators of hope believed that much smaller military budgets and higher rates of return would permit a significant shift from the wealthy toward the poor, in the United States and around the world. Instead, we have witnessed military budgets surpassing those of the Cold War period, no worker benefit from productivity gains, and acceleration in the rate of enrichment of the already rich, especially in the Third World but also in the United States.

In the United States, from 1989-1999 productivity rose 20.5%, but average workers received none of the benefit, according to the authors of *The State of Working America 2000/2001*. The median hourly wage among men was slightly less in 1999 than in 1989, and women saw just a 4% increase.

**Trend Seven:** Governments are not being held sufficiently accountable for ensuring that development encompasses the human needs of all and does not violate human rights.

Political movements and programs manifested in governments are not taking into account the full panoply of human needs for all of their citizens. This is true for Third World governments that prop up the current global economic structure in order to receive personal gain or gain for their families, and in a different way it is true for Second World governments that feel compelled to limit the freedoms of expression, speech, and democratic participation. Selfish motivations of personal aggrandizement and personal power continue to block the more extensive human development of billions of people, around the world. We have no consistent internationally enforceable standards of what constitutes the minimal fulfillment of human needs.

**Trend Eight:** The instantaneous nature of telecommunications combined with severely lower wages
in four-fifths of the world create new economy conditions for the globalization not only of manufacturing, but also of services such as software development, copy editing, accounting, and technical services.

Numerous studies indicate that corporate investments in Third World countries continue not only to take millions of manufacturing jobs from the U.S. to abroad, but also to take service jobs to the source of inexpensive labor also.

**Trend Nine: The “race to the bottom”, the bottoming out of life conditions for the vast majority of humanity provides the raison d’être of continuing international migration.**

This consists of the combination of a) global capital mobility, b) global labor immobility, c) rising national debts with structural adjustment programs and little governmental accountability, d) free trade policies that help the most productive (U.S.) sectors of the world economy at the expense of least developed areas, e) no sharing of the peace dividend or productivity dividend with the world’s working population, f) corporate-induced sub-living wages in such areas as maquiladoras and free-trade zones, g) the export of manufacturing and service employment to the Third World with its over-abundant supply of displaced, cheap labor, g) the destruction of local economies throughout the world, and h) the use of ethnic, religious and political divisions to retain control.

One billion people live on less than $1 per day. According to Lester Brown in his book *State of the World*, “841 million people in the world are malnourished, 1.2 billion lack access to clean water, 1.6 billion are illiterate, and 2 billion do not have access to electricity.” David Korten concurs, stating that only 20% of the world’s 6 billion people enjoy what we consider a middle class existence in the United States. The income of the other 80% of the people in the world is meager and declining further.

Currently, according to Forbes magazine, the 225 richest individuals in the world have a combined wealth equal to 3 billion people. The three richest people on earth have combined assets greater than the 48 poorest countries. As more and more people are divested of resources and income and have no place to turn, immigration to higher opportunity countries like the United States is inevitable.

One corollary to the above is the fear that the population of the world is out of control and that current U.S. immigration policies are degrading the U.S. environment. This perspective is typically expressed by nativists who want to place a moratorium on immigration without addressing global inequality. In 1998 this fear became the object of a vote within the Sierra Club, a leading national environmental organization with over 500,000 members. The restrictionists focused on absolute numbers of people, ignoring the varying environmental impacts of different social institutions and classes,
and how these affect the environment. By over a 3 to 2 margin, the Sierra Club rejected the proposal to reduce immigration levels to the United States.

As explained by Emanuel Sferios “The U.S. is home to 5 percent of the world’s population yet consumes 30 percent of the world’s resources, and with the richest 1.1 billion people on the planet consuming 64 percent of the wealth and the poorest 1.1 billion just 2 percent, it makes little sense to blame population as a whole for today’s environmental crisis...‘The average Swiss’, points out Walden Bello, former director of Food First, ‘pours 2,000 times more toxic waste into the environment than the average Sahelian farmer’.”

Sferios makes the following points:

- Producers—not consumers--have the greatest power to degrade the environment. This is true, for example, in terms of the destruction of habitats and the packaging of products.
- Marketing creates wants and choices that degrade the environment. “Only if one believes the laissez faire notion that supply merely fills demand...can one blame consumers for the environmental degradation resulting from industrial production.”
- Land development too has little to do with population growth: suburban sprawl gobbling up prime agricultural land and wildlife habitat are planned and built by developers for profit and are increasing six times faster than the population. “Corporate and government policy, not population density, accounts for degradation.”
- “Overpopulation, environmental degradation, and social injustice all result from the same global economic system that seeks to increase profits at all costs. As local economies in the Third World are replaced with profit-driven, export-oriented industries—largely the result of ‘structural adjustment’ programs imposed by the Work Bank and IMF to benefit wealthy investors—poverty and inequality increase. This leads to higher fertility rates as poor families have more children in order to generate income and ensure economic security in their old age. As Bellow points out, ‘inequality amidst poverty provides the most fertile conditions for high reproductive rates, just as living standards constitute the best guarantee that counties will experience the demographic transition to lower fertility rate’.” Sferios provides examples of where social policies dramatically reduced the fertility rates in countries because there was better health security, education, food security, and old-age security, in the period of 1960-85: Sri Lanka, China (pre-1980), and the Indian State of Kerala.

Sferios concludes that corporate and government policies are producing both environmental degradation and social injustice, and posits that changes in the global economic system, not coercive population control measures like forced sterilization or militarizing the borders, are needed. The world’s population will not stabilize any time soon.
Trend Ten: A growing opposition to the worst aspects of globalization is increasingly based upon an analysis of the identification and satisfaction of basic human needs as human rights, asking how those basic needs and rights can be met within a framework of individual and social responsibility for all people on earth.

It is not enough to criticize corporate globalization for its negative impact on working people and migrants. Instead, many groups and local populations are working harder than ever before to identify and create the conditions in the world for true economic and social development and true democracy for all peoples. This is not just a matter of “globalizing solidarity”, as many of the more overtly political groups would argue is the key. This is a matter of seriously re-conceptualizing the universal human needs of all the people on earth and then applying our collective wisdom and political will to meeting those needs, such as the Values Group is undertaking in the United Nations. A human needs-based, positive, humane economic and social agenda is being advanced, re-establishing the connection between our human values and our economic and social institutions.

CONCLUSIONS

1. Growing inequality on a world scale provides the foundation for increased immigration, irrespective of strict or generous immigration policies.

2. The nomenclature of immigrant vs. refugee vs. undocumented in the global economy needs to be changed. Immigrants are increasingly none of the above, but rather “refugees from the global economy”, in that they are displaced persons seeking refuge from structures that they cannot control and that are causing them and their families irreparable harm.

As we saw in the global context focus group when asked to probe the issue of why civil wars occur, the underlying basis for religious, ethnic and political conflict can usually be attributed to goals of economic power, the drive for higher “economic returns”, and resulting global economic inequality.

The World Council of Churches adopted the following redefinition: “People leave their communities for many reasons and are called different names – refugees, internally displaced persons, asylum seekers, economic migrants. As churches, we lift up all those who are compelled by severe political, economic and social conditions to leave their land and their culture – regardless of the label they are given by others. Uprooted People are those who flee because of persecution and war; those who are forcibly displaced because of environmental devastation, and those who are compelled to seek sustenance in a city or abroad because they cannot survive at home.”
3. A more complete vision of human needs and stable communities, the development of new economic and social arrangements, and political will combined with organization constitute the likely combination that can slow or end forced international migration.

4. In the medium run and especially the long run, the root causes of immigration must be addressed or the multiple challenges to Santa Clara County will grow, but even more importantly, the life conditions of billions of the globe’s inhabitants will not change for the better.

5. Immigrants will continue to be blamed for any shortcomings found in the US, California or Silicon Valley economy, instead of corporate and government policies that shape the reasons for forced immigration to begin with. Blaming immigrants will occur:

- With or without a recession
- Particularly in an economic downturn
- Despite the impressive contributions of immigrants in Santa Clara County and the U.S.

Immigrants more than any other group of workers are outsourced, disposable, temporary, low-wage, and contingent, absorbing the brunt of accelerated risk-taking and profit-taking of the New Economy, but because they are perceived as outsiders and not “as us”, they are the first to be blamed. Even the California Budget Project, an independent research group that recently studied the growing income gap in California without a recession, views immigration and immigrants as a cause of the disparity between rich and poor rather than the result or a victim of it. “Economists examining the widening gap between rich and poor blame...the large number of immigrants in the state’s work force.”

Given growing global economic inequality, four permanent myths pervade the thinking of well-meaning people:

- It is a myth that the United States can solve its gap between rich and poor without addressing the gap between rich and poor on a world scale.
- It is a myth that the United States can “train everyone out of poverty”. As long as the conditions for worldwide immigration persist, and the low-wage job structure persists, no amount of training can close the gap in the United States.
- It is a myth that in the current corporate-dominated global system American jobs can be protected, or the US-made content of products can be maintained. The global economic imbalance favoring cheaper labor, displacing local communities, and spurring immigration overwhelms all such attempts.
- It is a myth that acting globally in local areas such as Santa Clara County will not make an important difference in addressing forced immigration. While local populations around the world must take the lead in improving their lives so that
forced immigration to the U.S. is not necessary, policy makers and U.S. residents must also be decisive and supportive in the face of human needs satisfaction and human rights abuses abroad. The push factors are entirely too powerful not to address them in terms of local impacts. As Patrick Taran, Director of the International Migrant Rights Watch Committee states, “In this intersection of globalization, migration and human rights, thinking globally and acting locally is no longer sufficient. We must also act globally, in analysis, strategy, and day-to-day action.” Especially in high-immigrant areas like Santa Clara County, the notion that “we have to deal with our own first” does not accept that immigrants are our own, and the international factors creating forced immigration directly impact the valley’s future.