Key Bridge and the vital role of immigrants in U.S. I READER COMMENTARY



Wenceslao Contreras Ortiz shows a digital image of his nephew Alejandro Hernandez Fuentes, a victim of the Francis Scott Key Bridge collapse, in Xalapa, Mexico, Friday, March 29, 2024. Hernández Fuentes left Xalapa 15 years ago to join his mother and sister in the United States. (AP Photo/Felix Marquez)

By Patricia Ford Roegner MSW,RN,FAAN April 13, 2024 at 8:09 a.m.

The horror of the Francis Scott Key Bridge collapse had personal impact having lived within two hours of there most of my life and crossing that bridge many times.

The poignancy of who died in the disaster also struck home — six immigrants from Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras, and Mexico doing roadwork in the middle of the

night. Fathers, brothers, friends, hardworking family men doing work that most of us native-born Americans would not take on.

Latino workers make up a third of our construction industry according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics. The fellow immigrants of those lost March 26 likely will do much of the work replacing the bridge. They join the immigrant workers who picked up the pieces after Hurricane Katrina and other disasters, along with doing much of the construction on office buildings, shopping centers and homes nationwide (<u>"How Key Bridge tragedy ties into immigration, DEI debates,"</u> April 2).

As a nurse, I know that immigrants especially those for whom English is a second language, also fill key positions in my profession, providing long-term care for older and disabled individuals. A recent study published in the Journal of Health Affairs found that immigrants account for over 18% of health care workers and over 23% of formal and informal long-term care. More than 27% of direct care workers and over 30% of nursing home housekeepers and maintenance workers are immigrants.

Amid the clamor from some quarters to slash immigration — especially from Latin American and African countries — keep this in mind: With shortages of health care and direct care workers growing, curtailing immigration would be a disaster for the industry and everyone it serves.









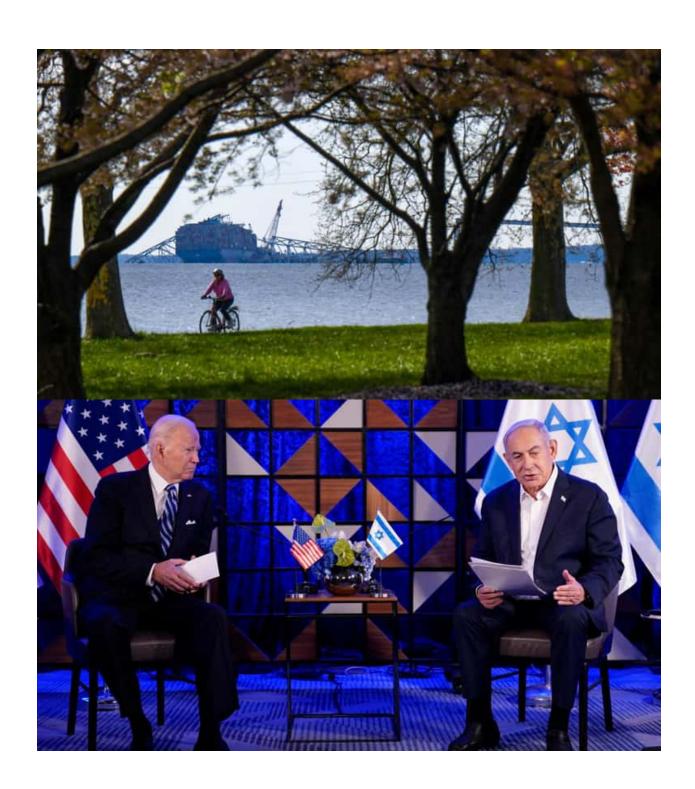


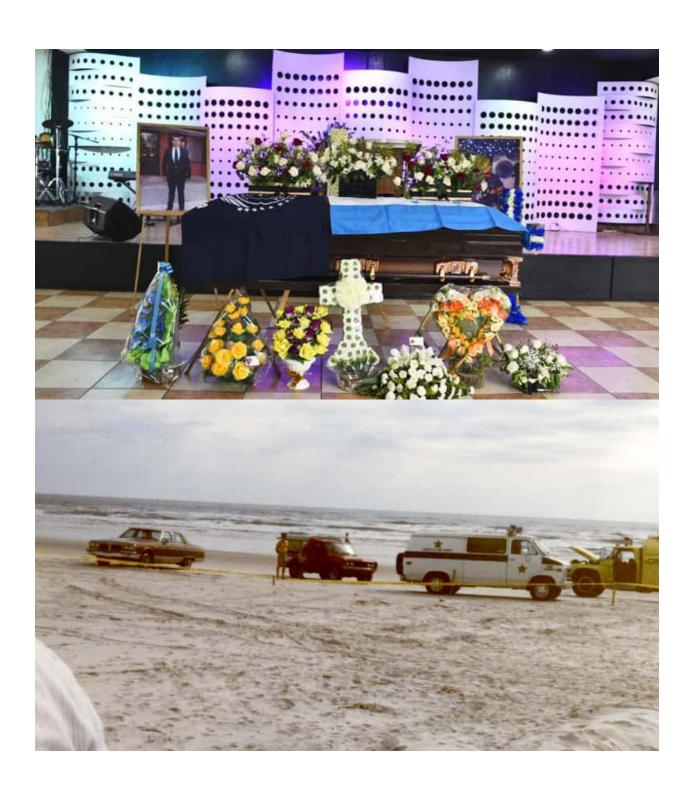
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Of course, immigrants play vital roles in dozens of other aspects of American life. The National Basketball Association reports that over 21% of its players are immigrants while the share of foreign-born players in Major League Baseball is 28%.



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Baltimore Symphony Orchestra to play freeconcert at Fort McHenry dedicated to Key Bridge tragedy and



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And how many ever stop to think that at some point — maybe 50 years ago, maybe 100, maybe 200 — someone from our family tree was part of that generation's immigrant community, very likely doing the work that native-born Americans of that day refused to do?

- Pat Ford-Roegner, Glen Mills, Pennsylvania

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By **READER COMMENTARY**

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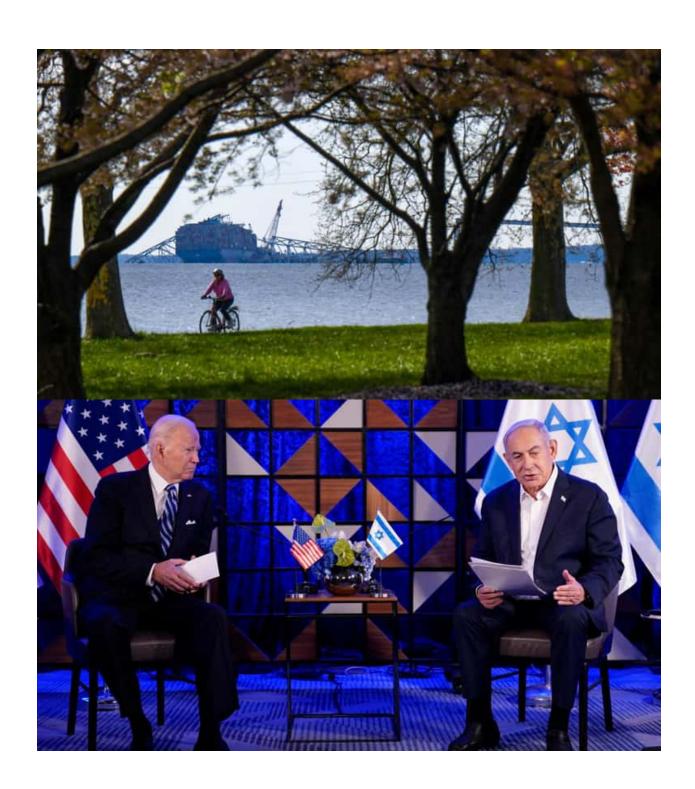


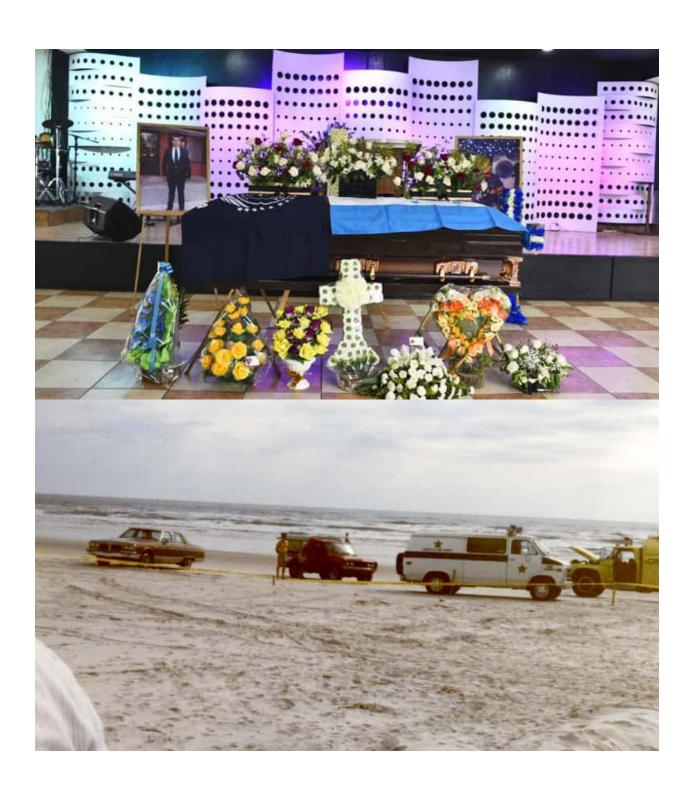
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