

YOUNG ADULTS PUTTING EMPLOYMENT DREAMS ASIDE



Geremias Romero can work as a special education teacher, but there are no teaching jobs to be found. Instead, he wraps a Salvadoran flag around his neck to help with the heat and sun, picks up cantaloupes, and tosses them into a tractor that he walks beside. Romera's parents are immigrants from El Salvador, and he was born in Newark, New Jersey. He is a high school graduate and has taken classes at Merced Community College, as well as the Art Institute of Philadelphia. He does not mind the hard work. Many young Americans today are finding that they do not have it as good as their parents did when they were their age. Most of the young generations today have no job and work well below their education and skill levels. The unemployment rate for 16 to 24-year-olds was 10.6 percent in 2006 and today it is 17.4 percent. "I'd rather keep myself working than get in trouble," says Romero, as he wipes his hands on his dirty and ripped blue jeans. Times are harder for people like Romero, who is a child of immigrants. Their parents worked hard so their children did not have to. They wanted their children to receive a good education and secure a good future for themselves. Even though their children are better educated, they are finding themselves working the same jobs their parents did. The farmer from Central Valley that hired Romero and other people like him says "We've never had so many American-born working in the fields." Raul Lopes, who is 23, has experience working as a contractor for a utility company, is also working the same job as Romero picking up cantaloupes. "We're still struggling, so we have to go where the work is," said Lopez. His mother is a Mexican immigrant and recently passed the U.S. citizenship exam. Approximately one-third of Americans aged 18 to 34 are children of immigrants, and economists are worried that if things do not change it will jeopardize the country's productivity. In 2009, 62 percent of adults thought their children would have a higher standard of living than they do. Today, that number is down to 47 percent according to a poll done by the Pew Economic Mobility Project. Thirty-two million people in the United States had either one or two foreign parents in 2008. Of these parents, there is a wide range of cultural and educational backgrounds. They do not reach the same milestones as their predecessors once did, such as finishing college, getting a job, and leaving home, according to a study done by Ruben G. Rumbaut, who is a sociology professor at UC Irvine. Rumbaut said, "If I had to update that study, the situation would be much more dire for children of immigrants." Education is not making as big of a difference today. Some of the fastest growing jobs are in the service industry, which pays approximately \$25,000 a year, and food preparation jobs, which pays approximately \$21,000 per year, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics.

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