

IMMIGRANTS SKEPTICAL AND UNCERTAIN OF WHAT AMNESTY ENTAILS?



The initial euphoria of the momentous amnesty scheme declared by President Barack Obama, having dimmed somewhat, many immigrants are realizing that their new found freedom comes with a lot of conditions attached. It's not a free lunch and even though it has provided them with a platform that may ultimately bring them on par, with native born Americans, the route is littered with legislation that they must make sense out of, before taking the next step. Most don't realize that the process and requirements of each group was going to be different and that, for the moment they can apply for temporary work permits. It is found that following the historic announcement undocumented immigrants are queuing up seeking expert advice as to what this entails for them and how best they can leverage it to their advantage. The Catholic Charities of the Archdiocese of Galveston-Houston, in the forefront of providing free immigration legal counseling to local residents hosted a program on Tuesday, for those immigrants who were seeking information pertaining to their eligibility regarding work permits. The Catholic Charities feel that under the new amnesty hundreds of thousands of illegal immigrants can now apply for work permits, albeit temporary. However, they feel that a majority of them are still ill-informed and unfamiliar of how to go about it. This is what the event wants to address. "People in general don't really understand the system. They're very afraid. They've spent their lives living in the shadows, afraid to come to the attention of the authorities," said Wafa Abdin, legal director at Catholic Charities. Many are still under the apprehension, that it is merely a ploy to get them out in the open and then take appropriate legal action that could include deportation. "I've been hearing from people that maybe they're just collecting our names so that we can be deported later on, so some people are really afraid to come forward and even benefit from the law," Abdin said. One young immigrant, who had been in the country since he was five, said that this was the happiest day in his life till now. "It's just awesome that I'll be able to contribute, give back to this country that has given us so much," he said. During the event, a lot of enthusiasm was shown and most wanted to start immediately. The question that was asked again and again, evoking the same answer was, "What if you are already on the US deportation list?" Honestly, there is no answer to that. You cannot answer either way. The government is not likely to release specific details in the next two months. All they can do is wait and hope for the best. Catholic Charities are saying that they will continue to offer legal and expert advice to the immigrants and keep upgrading them, whenever new information crops up. They said that they are available for one-to-one meetings for people who schedule them and also recommend that immigrants visit their website for more information.