

"Migration is Sweet"

Monarch Butterfly installation by Jesus A. Valdez

Sponsored by Jolt:

Jolt is building a movement of Latinos across Texas to ensure that our community is treated with the respect we deserve. We build the collective voice, power and influence of our community so that our families are treated with equality and dignity.

What we believe is simple — Texas and our democracy are stronger when everyone has a seat at the table and when our voices and families are treated with equality and respect. For too long our community and our contributions have been ignored. The hard work and sacrifices of our families and parents have been belittled by some — calling us “rapists,” “diseased” and “criminals.” We are tired of this hate and are standing up to take back our state and democracy, so that it works for hardworking and honest families like our own. We stand for respect, family and equality.

Sharing stories through art increases visibility for Latino issues and recognizes the political power the Latino community holds. The Monarch butterfly represents the right of people to move freely across borders. Conchas, Mexican sweet bread, depicted on the edge of the wings, represents the culture and calls attention to the contradictions of those who love so many aspects of Mexican culture, but don't necessarily love the people who make it beautiful. Jesus A. Valdez, architect, is the designer of “Migration is Sweet,” inspired by architecture to elevate the human condition.

Hard-working immigrants in our community have experienced harsh conditions trying to provide food, housing, education, and health care for their families. In the report "Building a Better South", produced by Workers Defense Project, Partnership for Working Families, Dr. Nik Theodore examines the work conditions of 1,435 construction workers in six major cities in the Southern U.S., Dallas and Houston included. This research provides information about the employment experiences of the men and women who work on construction sites.

Construction activity in the southern United States is booming. In Texas and Tennessee, construction now generates more dollars annually than it did before the Great Recession, and in Florida, Georgia, and North Carolina construction spending is rapidly approaching pre-recession levels. In these five states alone, construction spending topped \$175 billion in 2015, accounting for about one in four dollars generated by the industry nationally. The increased demand for construction has led to higher sales volumes for all construction sectors, and higher profit margins for the residential building sector of the industry

Unfortunately economic hardships, few or no opportunities for career advancement, unstable work, injuries and even death on the job are commonplace for construction workers in the South. Health and safety on the job is of particular concern, as the industry has seen the number of injuries and deaths rise with industry growth. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, the number of fatalities in the construction industry in 2015 was the highest since 2008. More than 900 construction workers were killed on the job in the U.S. in 2015, equating to the death of a construction worker every nine hours. (U.S. Department of Labor & Bureau of Labor Statistics. Fatal occupational injuries in 2015.) For the WDP full report, go to <http://www.workersdefense.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/Build-a-Better-South-Full-Report-Digital.pdf>

A non-profit organization, Equal Justice Center of Austin, offers “Know Your Rights” guidance to immigrants. They also offer legal help with wage theft or unpaid overtime; workplace discrimination and retaliation; DACA updates; legal help for survivors of sexual assault; and legal help for H-2B visa holders.