

"The Lucky Ones"  
By Tyler Johnson

Dust blows across a field of crops that stretches as far as the eye can see. Dozens of immigrants, sweating and working for less than minimum wage, do not complain about the heat or the dirt, for this life is better than the violent and dangerous life they escaped in Mexico. They came in here in search of a better life, and while they face prejudice, racism, and bitter contempt, they do not complain, for they are the lucky ones. One laborer, only a child, has to work harder to keep up with the adults, his uncle among them, but he does not complain, for this is better than a life in Mexico.

With so much farming and manual labor available in the Northeast Ohio, it is common to find both legal and illegal immigrants residing in local communities. One such immigrant, Mr. Chavez, came to Perry, Ohio with legal status at only eleven years of age. Chavez and his family came in search of a better life away from the drugs, stealing, and educationless society of Mexico.

As a young immigrant in the US, Chavez struggled, for he was unable to speak the language. However, thanks to a welcoming community and what Mr. Chavez describes as everyone "try[ing] to help me learn day by day", he was quickly able to learn the language and engage in limited but meaningful conversation with his peers.

Admittedly, Mr. Chavez's experience as an immigrant was easier than most. His family came to the United States with a visa, known as U Visa, and he is part of a community of immigrants that support one another. A U Visa is used by law enforcement to aid in prosecution of mental and physical abuse cases common in alien trafficking. Chavez says that in his community, "Everyone is always looking out for each other," and it matters not that they know whom they are helping. He even describes an organization called HOLA that works to support immigrants at risk of deportation, marching and rallying to show unity. Just recently, HOLA has worked to fundraise money in support of a local Mexican boy named Juan whose financial situation made his medical Bill's unplayable by his family. Even with so much support from his community, Mr. Chavez is confident that, had it not been for the support of his Uncle Adrian, his family's immigration to America would have been utterly disastrous. Thanks to a faulty system, Mr. Chavez and his brother came to the United States a few weeks earlier than his parents. Without his uncle, Chavez would have been without a home until his parents arrived.

Although Mr. Chavez's experience was not overly trying, it was still fraught with difficulty. Chavez says that many companies require social security numbers to work and many immigrants are incapable of acquiring them. Also, Chavez and many immigrants in his community struggle to get a valid license and buy a house. Chavez talks about his brother playing soccer for a club that required him to fly to other states, but he was unable to, for he could not get a passport as an immigrant without citizenship. On top of the restrictions forced upon immigrants, Chavez's mother was taken advantage of in the workplace a time when his brother was unable to play with the club soccer team he spent countless hours practicing with thanks to his inability to

acquire a passport. Also, Chavez brings up his mother's working experience. He says she worked in a factory where the manager, "would treat her like she is nothing". Thankfully, the justice system prevailed in a successful lawsuit by all of the immigrants and the factory was forced to treat its workers fairly.

Finally, most trying of all for Mr. Chavez was the deportation of his father. Then a single parent, Chavez's mother had to take care of four children, work, and make sure they got to school, with no help. For the children, it was hard having your father taken from you at only four years old.

While Chavez counts himself among the fortunate, he would not have come to America if Mexico had the same opportunities because, "the president is working so hard to get rid of immigrants and we don't want to be where we aren't welcome"