

DROP THE I-WORD

Journalist Style Guide for Covering Immigration

Tips & Guidelines for Reporting on Immigration:

- Place the humanity of immigrants at the center.
- Report from a multiracial perspective -- immigrants come to the U.S. from every country in the world, and most Latinos in the U.S. are not immigrants.
- Cover immigration as a civil issue, not a criminal one. Familiarize yourself with current policies and laws, and accurately report on immigration reform legislation.
 - Immigration laws are complex. Do not state as a fact that someone has violated the law without sufficient attribution.
 - Use “illegal” only to describe an action, not a person.
- Remember: there is no one word that can describe all situations of undocumented immigrants.
- Familiarize yourself with the range of categories describing a person’s citizenship and immigration status: nationality, country of origin, citizen, permanent resident, undocumented/unauthorized.
- Do not specify a person’s immigration status unless it is relevant to the story.
- Examine the ways immigration issues intersect with systems and institutions across society, such as child welfare and local law enforcement.
- Use terms that are legally accurate and avoid racially and politically charged labels.

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OFFENSIVE

USE INSTEAD

"Illegal immigrant"
"Illegal Alien"
"Illegals"

Unauthorized Immigrant
Undocumented Immigrant
Immigrant Without Papers
Migrant
Foreign National

Anchor Babies

Citizen child of
undocumented immigrants

"Illegal Worker"

"Undocumented Worker"

"Undocumented
Alien"

"Undocumented Immigrant"
"Immigrant Entering Without
Inspection"
"Immigrant seeking status"