

# La Voz de La Conexión



February 2022

La Voz, a Spanish term for “the voice,” is the monthly news digest for La Conexión.

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## La Conexión News

### WE ARE GROWING! THE LA CONEXION IMMIGRANT SOLIDARITY COMMITTEE TRANSITIONING INTO THE NW OHIO IMMIGRANT RIGHTS NETWORK

The membership of La Conexión has grown and our solidarity work has expanded accordingly. In 2017, La Conexión organized a rally protesting Trump’s anti-immigrant executive orders. At that rally, there was a call to participants to help us form a solidarity committee to support immigrants. That was the beginning of the “La Conexión Immigrant Solidarity Committee.” The committee carried out extremely successful and impactful work on public education, legislative advocacy and direct support. By 2019, the membership and work of La Conexión had expanded greatly over the NW Ohio region, and it became necessary to also expand the solidarity work in the community at large. In February 2019, La Conexión convened a group of organizations and faith leaders about the idea of forming a network. At that meeting, the *NW Ohio Immigrant Rights Network* was formed. The Network continued the very successful work educating the public on immigration related issues, advocating members of Congress for much needed legislative changes, and providing direct support.

Therefore, it is time to formally transition the La Conexión Immigrant Solidarity committee into the Network. We are announcing that the La Conexión Immigrant Solidarity Committee Facebook page will now be named the NWOH Immigrant Rights Network. We are also revamping our website with a special section provided to the Network. More to come! We appreciate your continued support and involvement. The work at the grassroots is not possible without solidarity in the community at large. We need you. THANK YOU!

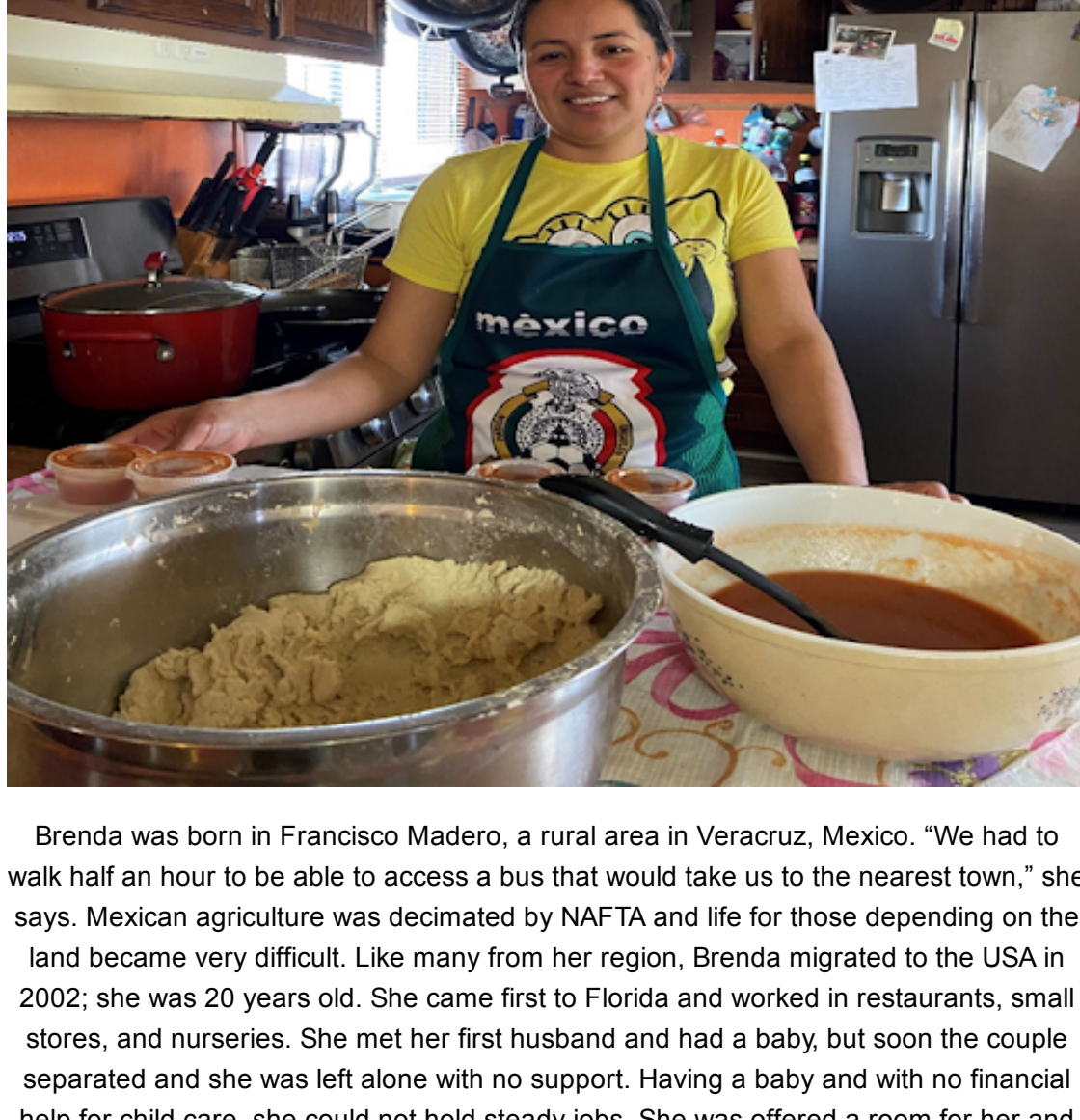
### MEET A MEMBER OF OUR TEAM: ESTELA DE LA ROCA – COMMUNITY ORGANIZER

Estela De La Roca is one of La Conexión’s community organizers. Estela and her family are from Guatemala. Economic conditions were bad in the country, and their printing business did not provide enough to sustain the family. In addition, gang violence was growing in her city and Estela and her husband grew concerned about their three daughters’ safety. Her sister was already living in Napoleon, Ohio and would tell them it was so safe here. They finally decided to make the excruciating decision of leaving their country. In 2002 she and her husband migrated to the USA with their three daughters who were 12, 15, and 19 years old. Estela and her husband worked in the fields, nurseries, and small manufacturing plants. The family was able to adjust their immigration status and Estela became a citizen in 2020. “My citizenship came late and I could not vote in 2020, but now I am making sure I register and vote. I am concerned about the upcoming elections,” she says. Estela started working with La Conexión before the pandemic in 2020. She is in charge of the western part of the NW Ohio region. Estela provides the community with know-your-rights information and integration services, identifying resources and assisting them navigating systems that are new and complicated for the newcomers. Estela says that “The community here are very satisfied with the work and assistance provided by La Conexión, and that makes me very happy.”



Estela at work (left)

### MEMBERS PROFILE: BRENDA



Brenda was born in Francisco Madero, a rural area in Veracruz, Mexico. “We had to walk half an hour to be able to access a bus that would take us to the nearest town,” she says. Mexican agriculture was decimated by NAFTA and life for those depending on the land became very difficult. Like many from her region, Brenda migrated to the USA in 2002; she was 20 years old. She came first to Florida and worked in restaurants, small stores, and nurseries. She met her first husband and had a baby, but soon the couple separated and she was left alone with no support. Having a baby and with no financial help for child care, she could not hold steady jobs. She was offered a room for her and the baby in a house in exchange for cooking for workers working in the fields. One day one of the workers came early and sexually assaulted her. By this time, her father had also migrated to this country and was working in Ohio, so she moved with her dad around 2008. Once here she began to work in meatpacking. There she met her current husband and they now have two other babies, 4 and 2 years old. She quit her job to take care of the babies. “My dream is to open a restaurant or some sort of food business. I love to cook, that is my passion,” she says. Brenda has been a member of Conexión since its establishment. “This is such a needed and useful organization,” she says. “There was nothing like this in Florida. Now I am informed about resources, we have English classes, our children are helped with school homework, and we know that even with no papers, undocumented persons have rights.” She says that she wants the public to know “We don’t come to commit crimes or live off public benefits. We work hard and are willing to take jobs nobody wants for meager wages. We contribute to this community, and hopefully Congress will open up paths to allow new immigrants to contribute even more.”

### LA CONEXION OFFERS FREE ENGLISH CLASSES FOR ADULTS AND TUTORING/ACADEMIC ASSISTANCE FOR THE YOUTH

Our adult English classes and our youth tutoring and academic assistance program “Nuestros Niños El Futuro” began on January 27, 2022. Our youth classes had been suspended since March 2020 due to the pandemic. Adults classes resumed last semester. Classes are held every Tuesday and Thursday from 6-7:30 pm. BGUSU students provide tutoring and mentoring to our youth in a wonderful setting provided free of charge by the First Presbyterian Church. We are very appreciative of the many partnerships and time donated by teachers, tutors, and those who help transport the families, as this allows us to offer these programs free of charge. Both classes are open to immigrant families of any nationality, not only to Latinx.

The adults’ English class is still in need of volunteers to assist our lead teachers. Interested individuals please communicate with La Conexión: 419.308.2328 or [laconexionwc@gmail.com](mailto:laconexionwc@gmail.com)



## National and International News

### “Florida seeks to stop the arrival of immigrants to state,” *AP News*

Florida Governor Bill de Santis’s latest immigration bill has been approved along party lines by the Senate Judiciary Committee. The bill would prohibit government agencies from interacting with companies transporting undocumented immigrants into Florida. Republicans claim the bill is meant to reduce crime while Democrats respond that the majority of undocumented individuals brought to the state by the federal government are unaccompanied minors seeking to be reunited with family or placed with sponsor families.

### “Biden’s immigration goals fade after setbacks at the U.S.-Mexico border,” *Reuters*

This article discusses Biden’s immigration plans and where these plans are stuck, being challenged, and succeeding. It presents an administration possibly divided on immigration with two senior-level, relatively progressive immigration advisors preparing to leave and more security-focused advisors staying. While internal sources point to the success of re-settling over 80,000 Afghan refugees, others point to the problematic record-number of arrests along the U.S.-Mexico border and Biden’s deportation of thousands of Haitian asylum seekers.

### “Biden’s immigration policies have left Haitians stranded in Mexico,” *Vox*

From the article: “Thousands of Haitians are indefinitely trapped in Mexico. They face pervasive racism, and many are unable to work, have no access to medical care, and are targets for criminals. Most have arrived in the last year, hoping that the Biden presidency would open up an opportunity for them to finally seek protection in the US.

Those hopes were in vain. Now, Mexico is seeing a sharp uptick in Haitian asylum applicants — a surge it is unequipped to manage — all because the United States has offloaded its immigration responsibilities onto its neighbor.”

### Become Involved with La Conexión!

We are looking for additional volunteers who are interested in advocacy, educational programming, communications, and other tasks. Anyone interested in becoming involved, please contact: [laconexionwc@gmail.com](mailto:laconexionwc@gmail.com).

## Giving to La Conexión

La Conexión, a 501(c)3 organization, can accept tax-deductible donations. You can donate through the Facebook page: look for the [blue “Donate” button](#). All proceeds benefit La Conexión. Facebook does not take a fee or any portion of the money.

Donations can also be made by mail at:  
La Conexión  
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