First ‘OC Insight’ Episodes Focus On Immigration and Wage Issues

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WHEN THE FIRST two “OC Insight” episodes air, viewers will see discussions on illegal immigration and wage issues. Here is a glimpse of the program highlights.

Immigration Issues
The first “OC Insight” tackles immigration. A panel of experts — Erualdo R. González, assistant professor of Chicana and Chicano studies; Lilia Tanakeyowma, dean of student affairs at Santa Ana College; and Amin David, community activist and president of Los Amigos of Orange County — met with moderator Roger Cooper to discuss why some people are alarmed at the number of immigrants settling in Orange County.

“The whole immigration debate is disquieting,” David said. “For many years, this country has extended a quasi invitation to those living south of the border to come and work here. Suddenly, when we’re faced with a declining economy, everyone wants to blame immigrants. We need a reality check.”

Tanakeyowma added, “This is a historical reaction. Whenever we are facing deficits and budget cuts, we blame immigrants. We need a reality check.”

González advocates merging such ideas with public policy. “I understand people’s concerns about losing what they believe are American standards,” he said. “But this country has always been changing and adapting. We need to be the agents of social change and work with immigrants to make our communities stronger.”

Waging a Living
Three experts — Davina Ling, assistant professor of economics and the director of the International Center for the Economics of Pharmacueticals, Aging and Health on campus; Lucetta “Lucy” Dunn, president and chief executive officer of the Orange County Business Council; and Alan Woo, director of planning and program development for the Community Action Partnership of Orange County — addressed the problems facing low-wage earners in Orange County in the second episode of “OC Insight.”

Orange County ranks second in the nation when it comes to high housing prices. Today, the average home price in the county is more than $700,000. For low-wage earners, the high cost of living, especially housing, can easily push them into poverty.

“Many people who work full time can’t make a living here,” Dunn said. “To afford a one-bedroom apartment in Orange County, you need to make at least $26 an hour. Our housing costs keep many out.”

In addition to the housing crunch, Woo said the lack of affordable child care is a big problem for working mothers, particularly if they are single.

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