

# Myths vs. Truths on Immigrants' Banking Rights

## MYTH# 1:

A Social Security number is needed to open a bank account.

---

## MYTH# 2:

Undocumented immigrants cannot get loans or build a credit history.

---

## MYTH# 3:

Banks are the only safe and full-service financial institutions.

## About NEDAP

The **Neighborhood Economic Development Advocacy Project (NEDAP)** promotes community economic justice, and combats discriminatory economic practices that harm communities and perpetuate inequality and poverty.

NEDAP provides training and technical assistance, community education, GIS mapping, and legal support to help local groups identify and confront pressing financial justice issues. NEDAP also brings groups together in coalitions to press for policy reform and systemic change.

*For more information, visit: [www.nedap.org](http://www.nedap.org)*

## Immigrant Financial Justice Project

NEDAP's **Immigrant Financial Justice Project** promotes equal access to financial services and credit for immigrant New Yorkers, through community education, organizing and coalition advocacy.

*To download this brochure & other materials on immigrant financial issues: [www.nedap.org/programs/ifjp.html](http://www.nedap.org/programs/ifjp.html)*

# THE TRUTH ABOUT IMMIGRANTS' BANKING RIGHTS



**IMMIGRANT FINANCIAL JUSTICE PROJECT**  
Neighborhood Economic Development  
Advocacy Project (NEDAP)  
176 Grand St., Suite 300  
New York, NY 10013  
(212) 680-5100  
[www.nedap.org](http://www.nedap.org)

### TRUTH # 1:

Many banks and credit unions open accounts for people without a Social Security number.

No laws prohibit banks from serving people who do not have a Social Security number. Under the USA PATRIOT Act, banks must ask you for your name, birth date, street address, and an *identification number*.

If you are not a U.S. citizen, this number may be a Social Security number, an individual taxpayer identification number (ITIN) from the IRS, or the number from a U.S. or foreign government-issued ID (such as a passport or consular ID).

Some banks have stricter rules than the law requires, but others have flexible policies and accept a range of documents.

It is important to present only valid forms of ID when opening a bank account.

### TRUTH #2:

Undocumented immigrants can take out loans and build credit histories.

Several banks, credit unions and other lenders accept the individual taxpayer identification number (ITIN) to issue credit cards and make personal, business and mortgage loans.

Lenders report information about your loans, and how you repay them, to the national credit reporting agencies - Experian, Equifax and TransUnion.

Building a positive credit history is important, not only to qualify for loans with lower interest rates and fees, but because our credit histories are considered by many employers, landlords, insurance companies, and others who make decisions about us.

### TRUTH #3:

Credit unions are safe alternatives to banks and offer a wide range of financial services.

Most credit unions offer savings and checking accounts, loans, credit cards, and other services. Unlike banks, credit unions are not for profit and are cooperatively owned by their members. They tend to charge low fees and interest rates.

Community Development Credit Unions have a special mission of serving low income communities. Many offer financial education, money transfers, free tax preparation and other special programs for their members. Many are based in immigrant neighborhoods in NYC (see list below).

Like banks, credit unions are regulated and accounts are insured by the government.

### NYC FINANCIAL JUSTICE HOTLINE

**(212) 925-4929**

(Se habla español.)

The hotline helps low income New Yorkers who have problems with bank accounts, debt collection, credit reports, and discriminatory lending practices.

For more information, call the hotline or visit:

[www.nedap.org/hotline/index.html](http://www.nedap.org/hotline/index.html)

### NYC COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT CREDIT UNIONS

Contact these credit unions for more information about their services, and to find out if you are eligible to become a member:

BETHEX FCU (Bronx)  
Main branch: 20 E. 179 St., Bronx, NY, 10453  
Tel: (718) 299-9100 / [www.bethexfcu.org](http://www.bethexfcu.org)

BROOKLYN COOPERATIVE FCU (Bushwick & Bedford-Stuyvesant)  
1474 Myrtle Ave., Brooklyn, NY 11237  
Tel: (718) 418-8232

LES PEOPLE'S FCU (Lower East Side)  
Main branch: 37 Ave B., NY, NY 10009  
Tel: (212) 529-8197 / [www.lespfcu.org](http://www.lespfcu.org)

NEIGHBORHOOD TRUST FCU (Washington Heights & West Harlem)  
4211 Broadway, NY, NY 10033  
Tel: (212) 740-0900 / [www.cwcid.org/ntfcu](http://www.cwcid.org/ntfcu)

UNION SETTLEMENT FCU (East Harlem)  
237 E. 104<sup>th</sup> St., NY, NY 10029  
Tel: (212) 828-6063