

Spring 2013 U.S. Immigration Alert!

A Newsletter from National Immigrant Solidarity Network
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May Day 2013: Immigrant March Across the U.S! What Does Latest Immigration Proposal Means to Us?

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May Day 2013: Hundred of Cities/Communities, Hundred of Thousands People Across the Country March to Demand Immigrant Workers Rights!

<http://www.immigrantsolidarity.org/MayDay2013/index.html>

Los Angeles, CA: Thousands call for immigration reform in Los Angeles May Day march

Thousands of mostly Latino protesters marched through downtown Los Angeles in a boisterous but peaceful May Day rally on Wednesday urging an overhaul of immigration laws to provide potential citizenship for millions of undocumented residents.

The march was believed to be the largest of more than a dozen similar demonstrations planned in cities across California by a coalition of organized labor activists, students, civil rights advocates and members of the clergy.

Obama has made immigration reform one of his top priorities for 2013.

The protesters, who are generally supportive of the proposed immigration revamp, called for the U.S. government to halt deportations of individuals who are potentially eligible for eventual citizenship.

Waving American flags and carrying signs with the slogan, "Stop deportations," the demonstrators chanted in Spanish, "Obama! Escucha! Estamos en la lucha!" ("Obama! Listen! We are in the fight!"), as they marched under sunny skies down one of downtown's main thoroughfares. The march spanned across more than two large city blocks, and one police officer told Reuters that unofficial estimates put the size of the crowd at roughly 3,500 people. No arrests were reported.

Wendy Carrillo, a spokeswoman for the Service Employees International Union, one of the organizing groups, said march leaders expected to draw at least 10,000 demonstrators throughout the day.

Milwaukee, WI: Thousands March in Milwaukee For A Broad Path to Citizenship on May Day

As part of a national day of action focusing on amendments to the US Senate's proposed immigration reform bill, thousands of people marched through the streets of Milwaukee today. Voces executive director Christine Neumann-Ortiz says that this year's May Day march happened at a historic moment, when the opportunity to pass federal immigration reform has never been better.

"This is both a moment of celebration for our progress, and a time to reflect on the fact that we haven't won the fight yet. Unity and action are more necessary than ever to achieve reform that keeps families together, protects all workers, ends the criminalization of immigrants, and doesn't discriminate against other groups by denying diversity visas, or LGBT families the right to be together."

Boston, MA: May Day March to East Boston Draws Thousands

On May 1st, 2013 at 5pm, around three thousand marchers poured into Central Square in East Cambridge, joining hundreds already gathered to welcome them on the long march from Chelsea, Everett, and Revere. Called by the May 1st Coalition, the annual march celebrates International Workers Day, and promotes immigration reform and a quick path to legalization for the approximately 11 million undocumented immigrant workers (1) living in the United States.

Two feeder marches, one from Everett and one from Revere, merged at 4pm with a large rally in front of Chelsea city hall. From there, thousands paraded peacefully, chanting "Si se puede, (We can do it)" "Today we march, tomorrow we vote," "We are a nation of immigrants," and "Obama, escucha, estamos en la lucha (Obama, we are in the struggle)." Some of the many organizations present included Chelsea United Against the Wars, Chelsea Collaborative, City Life/Vida Urbana, FMLN (Farabundo Martí National Liberation Front – the ruling leftist party in El Salvador), Brazilian Mothers Group, The Industrial Workers of the World, Unite Here Local 26, Common Struggle/Lucha Común, and Service Employees International Union (SEIU). The marchers were workers, both documented and not, from all across the Boston area, of every age and nationality.

New York, NY: At NYC May Day rally, calls for a more liberal immigration reform bill

One might imagine that activists at the pro-immigrant, pro-labor May Day rally in New York City would be happy about the bipartisan immigration reform bill currently in the Senate. But signs and activists at Wednesday's rally called the current draft bill an "unjust" plan that would leave out too many immigrants in its legalization scheme and focus too much on increased enforcement at the border.

One popular sign at the rally featured the face of Sen. Chuck Schumer, D-N.Y., behind barbed wire. The words: "No to Schumer and the Gang of 8," in Spanish—referring to the eight senators who hashed out the plan.

Some activists said the immigration compromise—which would trade stricter enforcement of current laws for a 13-year path to citizenship for most of the nation's 11 million unauthorized immigrants—is unjust and unacceptable.

Chicago, IL: Thousands Issue Call For Immigration Reform, End To Deportations

Thousands of demonstrators poured into Chicago's streets on Wednesday -- May Day -- as part of a nationwide call for comprehensive immigration reform, worker's rights and an end to deportations.

Among the marchers in Chicago was Yolanda Villadomec, who emphasized to ABC Chicago that the issues share a central thread of "family unity," which she described as "very important" to her.

"That's the point that I always look at: family unity. We want the mother, the father, the children together as a family," Villadomec told the station.

San Francisco, CA: May Day Marchers Spread Their Wings

More than 1,000 people marched under the brilliant San Francisco sun on May Day. Their signs, such as "Work in America/Live in America/Dream in America. Immigration reform now," their songs, chants and speeches wove together the twin themes of the day: worker justice and immigrant justice.

Alphonso Pines of the hotel and restaurant workers union Unite HERE put it this way, speaking to the crowd before the march: "We're marching for our families; we're marching to honour the sweat and the contributions of each and every working person. We're marching to honour the beauty of each and every family – queer or straight, immigrant or born here. We're marching because together we can make history. "Together we can win immigration reform that includes all workers and all families. Together we can stop the pain of deportation."

Download the Full Report: [May Day 2013 Reports from Across the Country](http://www.immigrantsolidarity.org/MayDay2013/MayDay2013Report.pdf)

LINK: <http://www.immigrantsolidarity.org/MayDay2013/MayDay2013Report.pdf>

May Day and the Failure of the Immigrant Rights Movement

by AJAMU BARAKA

How did a movement that put millions on the streets in 2006 allow the development of something called the “comprehensive immigration reform act,” now being debated in U.S. Congress, which expands the guest worker program, devotes millions to border and immigration enforcement, denies migrants access to public services and in general does not recognize the rights of migrants and immigrants as full human beings with human rights? This legislation does not in any way reflect the power and success of the immigrant rights movement—instead, it demonstrates its loss of autonomy and vision. What is being touted as immigration reform is no more than an unprincipled capitulation to the forces of nativism, white supremacy and liberal opportunism.

How did this happen? Unfortunately, the failure of the immigrant rights movement in the U.S. is a story that is not unique. Like a recurring nightmare that haunts progressive/radical activists and movements in the U.S. over the last forty years, the story of the immigrant rights movement is one in which the final chapter was predetermined as soon as it allowed itself to be influenced by the paternalism and conservative politics of the liberal non-profit industrial complex and the interests of the Democratic Party. Movement fragmentation and the marginalization of its radical elements, unprincipled pragmatism, demoralization and demobilization of its popular base, and eventual dissolution have proven to be the inevitable outcome of many popular movements, from the civil rights and women rights movements though to the environmental and now immigrant rights movements, after they allowed themselves to be hijacked by the liberal establishment and drained of all radical possibilities.

While there have been many missed opportunities and strange developments within the immigrant rights movement, one of the most politically backward developments was the movement’s embracing of the colonialist narrative related to the origins and character of the U.S. By pushing the “we are all immigrants” line, a position encouraged by the non-profit hustlers and political hacks from the Democratic Party that hijacked the movement, the movement collaborated with the white supremacist narrative that erased the presence of indigenous people in the territory that became the U.S. and the reality of the U.S. as a colonialist, white settler-State.

This communications strategy of winning “acceptance” from mainstream white supporters is always the objective of the media hustlers brought in to advise emerging movements and campaigns. However, the result of this communications strategy was that instead of winning over the white public, it unwittingly reinforced the narrative of nativists and white supremacists who see themselves as the first and only legitimate “immigrants” to a territory given to them by God as a “white nation,” making border enforcement and continued repression “legitimate” and necessary components of any agreement on immigration reform.

Settlers are not immigrants—they are occupiers. But of course this inconvenient fact is not part of the colonial fantasy that passes as U.S. history nor is it considered by the proponents of the “path to citizenship.”

Along with the brutal colonial conquest and attempted genocide of the indigenous people of this land, the racist foundations that justified genocidal policies and the institution of slavery and racist totalitarian terror for a hundred years after the official ending of slavery are subjects that many immigrant rights spokespeople assiduously avoid. The exception to the movement’s general silence on the issue of race and racism—even in light of the racist pogrom directed at undocumented migrants from Latin America since 2006—was references to Dr. King—but only as long as those references were the distorted, deradicalized version of Dr. King and the movement that produced him.

Not everyone in the immigrant rights movement embraced this petit-bourgeois silliness. A number of organizations have been involved in principled work around the human rights of migrant workers victimized by the contradictions of globalization, which has resulted in migration as an only option for survival for many workers and displaced farmers. But for individuals and organizations that did not toe the liberal, Democratic Party “pro-citizenship” line, as opposed to legalization, there was a price to pay. Those organizations were either under-funded or de-funded and relegated to the hinterlands of the movement.

Immigration legislation will probably pass in some form in the near future, but millions of people will still find themselves denied their full range of human rights, and we must continue the struggle for those rights. Our common humanity and commitment to social justice can serve a basis for building an independent, multi-national, anti-oppression, people’s movement that emphasizes people-centered human rights, self-determination, authentic decolonization, and a politicized global perspective that understands the contradiction of global capitalism and imperialism, which push and pull people across national borders. There is a basis in the U.S. for a new progressive social bloc, if only we can see its potential form and have the courage to struggle with our differences and contradictions to snatch victory back from our defeat. This is the key lesson

that we can take from the efforts for comprehensive immigration reform.

**Ajamu Baraka is a long-time human rights activist and veteran of the Black Liberation, anti-war, anti-apartheid and Central American solidarity Movements in the United States. He is currently a fellow at the Institute for Policy Studies. Baraka is currently living in Cali, Colombia.

4/18: AFSC Statement for New Release on Senate Immigration Reform Bill

New Immigration Bill Includes Support for Families and Workers, Yet Would Continue Key Failures of Current System

Quaker Group: Fair Path to Citizenship Must Reflect More Humane Principles

Newark, NJ (April 17, 2013) - The American Friends Service Committee (AFSC) finds the immigration bill introduced today a modest start on reform, due to provisions that address family unification and workers' rights and create a narrow path to citizenship for some immigrants. But much of the bill reproduces many of the current failed policies – making the overall bill a far cry from the just and humane reforms that immigrant communities, faith, labor and advocacy groups have been calling for.

“The Senate bill makes meaningful improvements for immigrants with temporary protected status, undocumented youth, and agricultural workers by providing a fast track to legal permanent residency. However, it would not end the current cruel, costly and inefficient system of detention and deportation, or the militarization of the border that has devastated communities on both sides of the border,” said Amy Gottlieb of the AFSC Immigrant Rights Program in Newark.

The bill not only doubles down on some failed policies. It also elevates them to the status of mandatory measurable triggers, including universal E-Verify, a 90 percent border ‘security’ metric, and a new entry-exit port system. It would waste billions on drones, costly high-tech gadgetry, additional fencing, and personnel.

One part of the bill does offer greater accountability and oversight of border enforcement, a long-standing demand by immigrant communities and their allies, including AFSC. It would establish a task force of border community stakeholders to evaluate and make recommendations regarding immigration policies along the border. Since 2010, the Border Patrol has claimed the lives of 20 unarmed civilians, and no official has been held accountable for these deaths. Federal agents seemingly operate with impunity, systematically violating the human rights and civil liberties of border residents.

The bill also includes the right of due process and worker protections under the mandatory E-Verify provision. However, E-Verify and other employment verification programs remain highly flawed, problematic and costly.

“We are gratified to see that the bill does begin an important conversation about future flows of workers to the U.S., by identifying significant labor and wage standard protections and opportunities to apply for permanent status and supporting family unity,” said Amy.

The bill strives to keep families together by restructuring a fundamentally flawed system with long waiting periods into one that provides new opportunities for people to migrate lawfully.

Still, because of limitations in the bill, there may be many who continue to live in the shadows, subject to the cruelties of a broken system including exploitation and abuse by unscrupulous employers.

The AFSC implores Congress to adopt compassionate and effective immigration reforms that are grounded in the following principles:

- Develop humane economic policies to reduce forced migration.
- Protect the labor rights of all workers.
- Develop a quick path to legal permanent residency and a clear path to citizenship.
- Respect the civil and human rights of immigrants.

- Demilitarize the U.S.-Mexico border.
- Make family reunification a top priority.
- Ensure that immigrants and refugees have access to services.

AFSC has created A New Path, which lays out policy priorities for humane immigration reform that protects the human rights of all people. These principles are derived from nine decades of work with immigrant communities, whose voices must be heard as we seek meaningful and humane policies.

For more on AFSC's immigrant rights work, visit <http://afsc.org/project/immigrant-rights>

4/22: Voces de la Frontera - Senate Immigration Proposal Introduces Landmark Reforms, But It's Not Enough

On April 17th, the US Senate released their proposal for landmark immigration reform legislation, titled "Border Security, Economic Opportunity, and Immigration Modernization Act".

The introduction of the bill represents a pivotal moment for the immigrant rights movement, and is a serious legislative effort to both legalize millions of workers and their families, and reform an outdated and dysfunctional system. But the proposal is not good enough in ensuring that it is both comprehensive and fair, and reforms a broken system in ways that build democracy and prosperity for all.

Voces de la Frontera and our youth arm Youth Empowered in the Struggle, commit to work with our US senators to ensure that in the amendment process the bill is improved to uphold the following principles:

- A path to citizenship for 11 million: While the bill does provide a path to citizenship to millions, it threatens to exclude 375,000 immigrants by establishing an arbitrary cutoff date of December 31, 2011. If the intent is to bring the maximum number out of the shadows and establish legal avenues, then this date will leave a significant number of people out of status, vulnerable to abuse.

- The waiting period of 13 years for US citizenship is too long. It should be aligned with other categories, such as Ag and Dreamers, to achieve US citizenship in 5 years. Second class status is not an option. Karla De Jesus, a 17 year old DREAMer and member of Youth Empowered in the Struggle, says, "My parents have worked hard at minimum wage jobs, but we would not be allowed to move forward as a family. What can they do for 13 years?"

- Removing unfair barriers to US citizenship. These include making the path to citizenship conditional on border enforcement and the flawed E-verify program. Workers would be required to establish "regular employment" to stay on the path to citizenship, putting an unfair burden on workers who have already been waiting decades for reform, and establishing a vulnerable relationship between employer and worker.

Omar Damien-Ortega, a Voces member who is facing deportation after his immigration status was used against him by Went Bend Mutual Insurance after Damien-Ortega filed a worker's compensation claim, is concerned about this vulnerability.

"There will be a continuation of exploitation of working people if you give employers too much power," says Damien-Ortega.

- Elimination of programs such as the so-called "Secure Communities" or the criminalization of future immigrants by treating re-entry charges as a criminal offense, when the individual presents no threat to society, and in fact has meaningful ties and no criminal record.

- Protecting our family-based immigration system: The bill provides important increases in family visas in some categories, such as removing the green card cap for spouses and minors of Lawful Permanent Residents, accelerates the processing of those in the backlog, helps refugees and asylum seekers reunite with family members, and reunites parents, children and Dreamers who were deported or are facing separation. But further reforms are necessary to:

- Not excluding siblings' ability to petition their brothers and sisters, nor parents' ability to petition their adult children over 31 years of age

Sofia Anguiano, a Voces member, is the eldest of nine children. Sixteen years ago, she petitioned for her all of her brothers and sisters to come to join her in the US legally. "They said it would take 10 years, but I've been waiting for 16 years. It's my dream to have my siblings by my side."

- Protecting the diversity visas that allow countries that do not have high numbers of migration to come to the US, and recognizing the rights of bi-national LGBT families to petition permanent partners.

Finally, while the bill would not deport those that qualify, every day 1,100 families go through the trauma of family separation and economic hardship. **The President can use his executive authority to immediately protect families that qualify for this reform.**

4/15: Republican money backs immigration push

Steve Peoples - Associated Press

BOSTON (AP) — As Congress readies for a drawn-out immigration debate, an expanding network of Republican fundraisers is pressing for a path to legal status for millions of immigrants living in the United States illegally.

Business leaders and donors who raised tens of millions in the last election are meeting with top GOP fundraisers and Republican lawmakers who may be reluctant to support what critics call "amnesty" for immigrants who broke the law.

At the same time, a coalition of fundraisers who support overhauling immigration is funneling donations to a new crop of outside groups designed to protect like-minded congressional Republicans who fear a backlash by GOP's core supporters.

In most cases, the donors have ties to Wall Street and businesses that want more high- and low-skilled immigrants in the nation's legal labor pool. Backed by the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, these business-minded Republican fundraisers say they're getting a relatively receptive audience in the face of an undeniable new political reality. Record Hispanic turnout helped President Barack Obama defeat Republican presidential nominee Mitt Romney last fall. And projected population growth ensures that immigrants' political clout will grow stronger.

The network of Republican donors is at odds with many on the GOP's right flank — tea party activists among them — who argue for increased border security first and foremost. That was largely the position of Romney, who encouraged immigrants without legal status to "self-deport."

"Immigrants are an important part of this economy and they're an important part of my business," said Frank Vandersloot, an Idaho businessman who steered more than \$1 million to a group backing Romney last year and gave tens of thousands more to others.

"I have met with many members of Congress and will continue to," Vandersloot said. "People will talk to me. And I'm grateful for it. I'm grateful they listen."

Top donors have signed onto a new bipartisan group known as the Partnership for a New American Economy, which includes business leaders and mayors who support a path to legal status for the estimated 11 million immigrants in the country illegally. New York City Mayor Michael Bloomberg, a billionaire, backs the organization, as does top Romney backer Bill Marriott, Jr. — who heads the Marriott International hotel company — and GOP donor Jonathan Johnson, the CEO of Overstock.com.

"These are people that can and do donate," Johnson said. "I think the more business leaders get involved in this, the more pressure will be put on Congress."

Congressional leaders are putting the finishing touches on legislation that would outline the most sweeping immigration changes in decades.

The donors mostly refused to identify the lawmakers they are lobbying but said they're communicating with as many Republican elected officials and new party fundraisers as possible. The list includes already-sympathetic figures such as Republican Florida Sen. Marco Rubio, who is among four GOP senators and four Democrats crafting a bill to improve border security, streamline legal immigration and offer eventual citizenship to millions now in the U.S. illegally.

A similar proposal favored by former President George W. Bush failed in 2007 following intense opposition from conservative

opinion leaders.

In some cases those opinions have begun to soften. Vandersloot said that congressional Republicans have been receptive behind closed doors, although strong opposition remains among the GOP's most passionate voters.

By boosting their role in the debate, major donors hope to assuage the fears of timid congressional Republicans worried about losing re-election — or facing primary challenges — should they side with Democrats on immigration.

Obama and the bipartisan Senate panel publicly support legalization, although the fate of the overhaul is uncertain in the House, where conservative Republicans hold more sway. Donors say they don't expect a speedy resolution to the debate. They're preparing a network of outside groups and donors to be active well into next year if necessary.

Still, some donors say there has been a wholesale attitude shift among Republican officials during private conversations.

"People are starting to understand that immigration is one of the issues that allows Republicans to have a comeback on all issues," said Charlie Spies, the founder and treasurer of the super PAC that raised more than \$142 million to help Romney's 2012 presidential bid.

Spies leads a new super PAC dubbed "Republicans for Immigration Reform" that draws from some of the same Romney donors to fund advertising campaigns designed to protect Republican lawmakers who support more lenient immigration policies. The group, which can accept unlimited donations along with its sister non-profit organization the Hispanic Leadership Network, has already spent \$60,000 to run ads in South Carolina to commend Republican Sen. Lindsay Graham's efforts.

At the same time, Spies says that his partner Carlos Gutierrez, the commerce secretary under President George W. Bush, is hosting private meetings with Republican officials and Republican donors who may not have been supportive of immigration reform in the past. Gutierrez is hosting multiple meetings a week across the country, targeting places with the highest concentration of donors — New York, Florida, Texas and California.

"Money is effective in that it helps drive a message," Spies said.

4/16:Cowboy Hat-Wearing Hero of Boston Bombing Is Famed Immigrant Peace Activist

[Taylor Berman <http://gawker.com>] There were hundreds of heroes in the aftermath of Monday's tragic bombing attacks in Boston. Doctors, police officers and even former NFL players responded with tremendous courage and saved lives. Carlos Arredondo — easily recognizable in photos and videos because of his cowboy hat — was one of those heroes and is prominently featured in two of the more memorable and traumatic images from Monday's attack.

In the above photo, Arredondo can be seen apparently holding together the femoral artery or tourniquet of a victim who had lost both his legs in the attack. "I kept talking to him. I kept saying, 'Stay with me, stay with me,' " Arredondo told the Press Herald.

And at the 1:45 mark of the video below, you can see Arredondo rushing to help victims just seconds after the first explosion.

But who is Arredondo? As several tipsters and publications have noted, the 52-year-old has quite the past.

Arredondo was watching the race to support a runner who was running the marathon in honor of Arredondo's son, Lance Cpl. Alexander S. Arredondo, who was killed in Iraq in 2004. When Arredondo was told (on his 44th birthday, no less) about his son's death by a group of Marines, he didn't believe them. From a 2007 New York Times article:

"I just screamed," he said. "I said 'No, no! It can't be my son.' "

Mr. Arredondo said he "lost it." He ran to his garage and grabbed a gallon of gasoline and a propane torch.

He took a sledgehammer and smashed the government van's windshield and hopped inside. As the officers tried to calm him, Mr. Arredondo doused himself and the van with gasoline and lit the torch.

There was an explosion, and the officers dragged Mr. Arredondo to safety. He suffered second- and third-degree burns over 20 percent of his body.

"I went to my son's funeral on a stretcher," he said. The incident — and the 10 months he spent in the hospital recovering —

spurred Arredondo to a life of activism protesting the war in Iraq. He drove around the country in his son's truck, which was carrying a coffin and was decorated with pictures of his dead son at his funeral. "As long as there are marines fighting and dying in Iraq, I'm going to share my mourning with the American people...Every day we have G.I.'s being killed, and people don't really care enough or do enough to protest about how the war is going," he told the Times. "Some people say I'm dishonoring my son by doing this, but this is my pain, my loss."

That loss grew exponentially four years later, when Arredondo's surviving son killed himself at age 24, partly out of grief from losing his older brother. Now, Arredondo has again found himself in the midst of tragedy and again responded with resiliency and courage. Below is an interview with Arredondo taken after the bombings.

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About National Immigrant Solidarity Network

NISN is a coalition of community, immigrant, labor, human rights and student activist groups, founded in 2002 in response to the urgent needs for the national coalition to fight immigrant bashing, support immigrant rights, no to the sweatshops exploitation and end to the racism on the community. Please visit our website: <http://www.ImmigrantSolidarity.org>

Contact Information:

E-mail: info@ImmigrantSolidarity.org
(213) 403-0131 (Los Angeles)
(212) 330-8172 (New York)
(202) 595-8990 (Washington D.C.)
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