

April 28, 2010

Greetings!

MAY DAY - WHY WE MARCH

The nefarious Arizona law - SB1070 - has captured the attention of the nation during the run-up to the International Worker's Day celebration of May First. It only gives working people, immigrants, youth, women, trade unionists, and their sympathizers more reason to march. It is estimated that masses of workers will take to the streets in over 70 cities nationally to not only decry the horrible legislative act in Arizona, but to demand a fair and humane immigration reform by this Democratic administration in 2010.

May Day is celebrated worldwide, although it was founded in the U.S. after the execution of the eight Chicago Haymarket labor martyrs at the culmination of the labor struggles at the end of the 1800s and the fight for the 8-hour day. These struggles for improved working and living conditions were led principally by European immigrant workers and were met with repeated acts of state terrorism and repression.

And, while the U.S. labor movement does not traditionally celebrate this labor-day, in city after city it has been roped into participating since 2006 by the pressure from below emanating from the immigrants' rights movement, which has increasingly become more militant in demanding immigration reform and the right to organize.

Once again, immigrants of all hue, but principally Mexican and Latin American, are at the fore-front of waging a tenacious fight for legalization and an end to repressive measures, either those that rain from the federal government or those from their respective states, SB1070 being the most recent example.

It's an unfortunate truism that there does exist terrible precedents to the Arizona experience. Three come to mind. During the 1930s over two million Mexicans were deported from the U.S., 1.2 million of whom were actually citizens of the United States, in a state-sponsored paramilitary operation dubbed Operation Repatriation. In 1892, 192,000 Chinese were required to register as foreigners and carry a state-issued photo identification card. It has been reported that less than 3,000 complied with the law. And, in the 1940s, 150,000 Japanese-Americans were rounded up and imprisoned in state-sponsored concentration camps for the duration of

the war.

It should not be lost on anyone that the radical increase in federal immigration enforcement by President Obama and the Department of Homeland Security Secretary Janet Napolitano created the broad-strokes parameters for what has occurred in Arizona. At all criteria levels of enforcement, the percentages are up from between 40 to 60 percent above the previous Bush administration - detentions, deportations, incarceration of minors, separation of families, expansion of private prisons, expansion of the 287(g) and Secured Communities programs (federal ICE and local police cooperation), border patrol personnel assignments, and the use of high tech surveillance tools and mechanisms.

In 2009 some 350,000 individuals were deported by DHS and the stated goal of this federal agency for 2010 is 450,000. When you take into consideration that an estimated 1.5 million Mexicans have voluntarily returned to their states of origin over the past year, according to Mexican government reports, due to the declining economic prospects and state-sponsored persecution, the removal factor will certainly climb to 3 million persons by the end of the year.

Fair and humane immigration reform is most urgently on the legislative agenda and will be the rally cry of marchers along with the demand to repeal SB1070. LEGALIZATION or NO RE-ELECTION is a slogan that strikes terror in the hearts of Democrats who will dispute the control of the U.S. Congress in the November elections. But, they have themselves to blame in that the Latino electorate was inordinately loyal during the general elections of 2006 and 2008, and the Democratic Party has not reciprocated. The Party has not enjoyed such a margin of majority status in both houses and the control of the White House since the 1970s post-Watergate election of President Jimmy Carter.

In a perverse way, Arizona's mistake may work in favor of moving the reform agenda forward. The immigrants' rights movement will next be perplexed by the type of reform proposed by the Democrats, which may not be to its liking. For the moment, let us identify with all those who will be singled out by the racial profiling SB1070 with a declamation that WE ARE ALL ARIZONANS!

Nativo Vigil Lopez
National President

Join us in this prolonged campaign for driver's licenses and visas for our families. The first step in making change is to join an organization that pursues the change we desire. We welcome you to our ranks.

Other organizations leading this movement include: Hermandad Mexicana Latinoamericana, Mexican American Political Association (MAPA), MAPA Youth Leadership, Southern California Immigration Coalition, Liberty and Justice for Immigrants Movement, National Alliance for Immigrant's Rights, and immigrant's rights coalitions throughout the U.S..

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