

Obama's Dirty War On Immigrants

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Under Bush, immigrant communities lived in a constant state of fear — terrorized by “Homeland Security” agents arresting anyone who appeared Latino and lacked ID. Families were separated, children left parentless, property abandoned, and long-lasting relationships severed.

This scenario — highly reminiscent of the NAZI Gestapo — has changed only slightly under Obama. Some say for the worst. Obama’s campaign promise of undoing Bush’s immigration strategy was, like nearly every other promise he’s made, a blatant lie. Instead, he’s adopted the “enforcement first” immigration approach — the style of John McCain that Obama once mocked.

The Obama Administration is taking immigration policies created under Bush and expanding them, much like he’s done with Bush’s war policies, bank bailouts, civil right restrictions (the Patriot Act, torture, unlimited/unchallengeable imprisonment, etc.).

Obama’s head of Homeland Security, Janet Napolitano, admits: “We are expanding enforcement, but I think in the right way.” In this case the “right way” is Bush’s way, though modified for public consumption.

While ending the large, media-attracting factory raids that Bush endorsed, Obama is intensifying “...a shift in federal law enforcement that began under George W. Bush and now has taken a particularly callous turn under President Obama.” (Los Angeles Times, Oct 3, 2009).

The Los Angeles Times refers specifically to the recent firing of 1,800 mostly immigrant workers in Los Angeles, who suffered the same fate as thousands of others around the country victimized by the Obama administration.

Companies that are suspected of hiring immigrants are targeted and closely monitored, “...but instead of concluding with a raid, Immigration and Customs Enforcement simply compels the employers to fire anybody whose papers aren’t in order under pain of ruinous civil penalties.” The Los Angeles Times concluded, “...the most appalling aspect of the Obama administration’s wretched conduct of this affair is its studied indifference to the fate of the men and women it has thrown out of work.”

Well said.

When immigrants are fired from their jobs, they receive no unemployment insurance. Thus, the heavy burden of being jobless during a severe recession is multiplied, and families who’ve lived in the U.S. for years suffer terribly. Obama’s merciless attitude to immigrants was displayed nationally when he proudly declared that, under his health care plan, “illegal

immigrants will not qualify.” When asked later about the health care of immigrant children, Obama seemed to show a moment of compassion. Exceptions may be granted, he said, “partly because if you’ve got children who may be here illegally but are still in playgrounds or at schools, and potentially are passing on illnesses and communicable diseases, that aren’t getting vaccinated, that I think is a situation where you may have to make an exception.” The President is astonishingly clear: caring for the basic well-being of immigrants or their children is of zero concern.

This coldness is reflected in all aspects of Obama’s immigration approach — programs born from the Bush administration. The New York Times explains:

“... Ms. Napolitano has expanded a program that runs immigration checks on every person booked into local jails in some cities. And she recently announced the expansion of another program...that allows for cooperation between federal immigration agents and state and local police agencies.” (Oct. 18, 2009).

The first policy means that any immigrant that lands in jail for whatever reason faces potential deportation. And although the law was created by Bush to deal with immigrants who committed “serious crimes,” Latino communities have long known this claim to be a fraud. Officers instead arrest immigrants on minor or manufactured charges and alter their lives forever.

The second mentioned program will greatly increase these injustices. Before Bush, immigration laws were enforced by the nationally-run immigration department, with the rationale being that local police were meant to protect and serve communities. Now, local police are being enlisted to hunt down immigrants, most of whom are no danger to anybody and productive members of their communities.

The dangerous result is that immigrant and Latino families will be pushed further into society’s shadows: they will be less willing to call police if they witness or fall victim to serious crimes, suffer from domestic violence, or are victims of hate crimes. If they are not paid by their employer — a very regular occurrence — no one will be held accountable.

These types of crimes will be greatly encouraged with Obama’s new policy, alongside another form of abuse. Many Latino communities have become familiar with police picking up suspected immigrants off the street and sending them to deportation facilities — with no crime committed. Knowing that these racial profiling abuses would likely increase with local police becoming immigration enforcers, the Obama Administration gave lip-service to the increased “oversight” of the expanded policy, but little action is likely to follow, and civil rights violations will almost certainly increase.

Another Bush policy being expanded under Obama is the controversial E-verify system, which gives governmental access to employers’ employment records, with the intention of verifying the legitimate documents of employees. Aside from the above-mentioned hardships this is already creating for thousands of families, the system is accused of being highly dysfunctional and error-ridden, like its predecessor the “no match” letter.

“No match” letters were mailed to workers and employers alike to notify them that a worker’s social security number didn’t match — implying that the worker was using a fake number to gain employment. The “no match” system was recently scrapped, likely due to

the enormous errors being committed and consequent outcry (this writer can personally attest that the system was flawed, since my Caucasian, Indiana-born domestic partner had such a letter addressed to her).

These policies of Obama's represent a drastic swerving to the right over immigration. But he's just following the Democratic Party line, itself becoming hysterically anti-immigrant. High ranking Democrat Charles Schumer is leading the Democrat offensive, helping create a highly punitive "immigration reform" bill that includes Bush-era border militarization.

So far, this bill consists only of "general principles" — policies agreed upon to appease the section of big business that benefits from immigrant labor. Highly skilled immigrants will be favored, lower skilled deported; some immigrants will be allowed to stay and work, while others are hunted down like animals. This divide and conquer strategy has already won over some immigrant and labor groups, who wrongly view the bill as "a step in the right direction." The Democrats have spoken at length about their immigration philosophy; they want to provide corporations with sufficient cheap labor while demonizing "undesirable" immigrants.

Why the right turn? Since having taken power of both Congress and the Presidency, the Democrats have proven to be a very proficient tool for the corporate elite, following much of the same policies created by Bush.

The enormous public anger over these policies creates in the Democrats an urgent need for distraction. Rather than focus on the super-rich that are profiting from the recession and the politicians feeding them trillions in tax dollars, the Democrats would rather have our scorn funneled toward society's most vulnerable population.

Always left out in the immigration discussion is why immigrants enter the U.S. at all. U.S. corporate-controlled foreign policy — under NAFTA and CAFTA — forced cheaply produced U.S. goods into the markets of poor countries to the south. Impoverished farmers and others were forced out of their country (where they would rather have stayed) to feed themselves and their families. U.S. corporations took further advantage of the situation by paying slave wages across the border and by paying immigrants in the U.S. below-poverty wages with no benefits. Speaking out against these injustices equals deportation.

Consequently, wages for both U.S. and Latin American workers are lowered by this divide and conquer tactic. Scapegoating immigrants is absolutely crucial to this strategy working.

Therefore, the only progressive solution to immigration is to unite all workers against the planned corporate offensive: CAFTA and NAFTA must be eliminated, and all workers in the U.S. must be given not only equal rights, but a livable wage. To achieve this, unions must fight harder to organize not only immigrants, but the millions of other workers who have little or no rights on the job. By doing so, corporations will be unable to exploit any worker so as to lower the wages of all workers. These lofty goals would be easier to accomplish if immigrant and labor groups diverted their energy and resources away from the Democratic Party, so that they could be used instead for real social change.

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