

IN FOCUS

RIGHT WING WATCH



(P)REVIEWING THE
Right Wing
PLAYBOOK
ON IMMIGRATION REFORM



1: Appeal to Racial Fears



2: Portray Latino Leaders as Racists



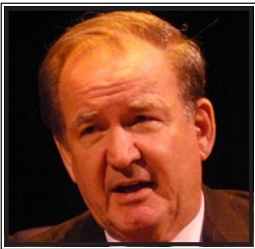
3: Portray Immigrants as Invaders



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(P)REVIEWING THE RIGHT-WING PLAYBOOK ON IMMIGRATION REFORM

Opponents of Comprehensive Immigration Reform Will Exploit U.S. Economic Woes As Addition to Arsenal of Anti-Latino, Anti-Immigrant Strategies

Vicious rhetoric in previous debates was accompanied by rise in anti-Latino hate crimes

Introduction

There is near-universal agreement that America's immigration system is not working well. Several years ago, broad bipartisan agreement was reached on a comprehensive approach to reform that would uphold the rule of law, serve America's economic needs, and honor our values and history as a nation of immigrants. Among the elements of principled and workable comprehensive immigration reform are improved enforcement of immigration regulations, revised guest worker policies, and some process for undocumented immigrants now in the country to earn their way toward citizenship. Unfortunately, it was in the end derailed by a campaign grounded in fear, stereotypes, and a divisive nativism that is unworthy of America's ideals.

The Obama administration has indicated that it will work with

THE PUBLIC DEBATE OVER COMPREHENSIVE IMMIGRATION REFORM IN 2006 AND 2007 WAS MARKED BY APPALLING ANTI-IMMIGRANT RHETORIC AND WAS ACCOMPANIED BY A RISE IN ANTI-LATINO HATE CRIMES TRACKED BY THE FBI.

congressional leaders to move comprehensive immigration reform legislation this spring; one bill was introduced in the House in December and momentum to enact legislation is picking up. That makes this an important time, as the ball gets rolling on the new legislative push, to review the surpassing ugliness of past campaigns waged against comprehensive immigration reform and to prepare for scapegoating that will exploit the suffering caused by the economic downturn in the U.S. Since those earlier campaigns were also accompanied by a real and tragic rise in violent hate crimes

against Latinos in the U.S., fair-minded Americans should be prepared to challenge and hold accountable media figures and public officials who use the debate over immigration policy to foment dangerous and destructive racial and ethnic resentments.

MICHELLE MALKIN BLAMED 'ILLEGAL IMMIGRANTS' FOR THE MORTGAGE CRISIS.



The Fire Last Time – And The Arsonists-In-Waiting

The public debate over comprehensive immigration reform in 2006 and 2007 was marked by appalling anti-immigrant rhetoric and was accompanied by a rise in anti-Latino hate crimes tracked by the FBI. In a report last year, the Leadership Conference on Civil Rights called “the legitimization and mainstreaming of virulently anti-immigrant rhetoric” one of the “most disturbing developments of the past few years.” Among the pundits promoting “fear and loathing” on cable television was Glenn Beck, who said “our country is on fire, and the fuel is illegal immigration.” Since then, the swine flu scare and the deep economic recession in the United States have given right-wing opponents of comprehensive immigration reform new fuel for inflaming anti-immigrant and anti-Latino sentiment. In September 2008, for instance, right-wing pundit Michele Malkin even blamed “illegal immigrants” for the mortgage crisis.

The 2006-2007 push for comprehensive immigration reform was supported by the Bush administration, much of America's business and labor establishments, and congressional leaders from both parties. But in spite of that broad support, the passage of reform was derailed by right-wing pundits who inflamed anti-immigrant sentiment, some members of Congress who gleefully participated in the fearmongering, and others who were simply afraid to resist it.

In October 2008, the Anti-Defamation League criticized anti-immigrant groups for utilizing the strategies of hate groups

and “resorting to hateful and dehumanizing stereotypes and outright bigotry to demonize immigrants.” To the categories identified by the ADL we can now add demagoguery over the swine flu virus and exploitation of the nation’s economic woes.

STRATEGY 1: Appeal to Racial Fear and the ‘Brown’ Threat to ‘White’ America

Some academic research suggests that people’s attitudes toward immigration are strongly influenced by their level of prejudice toward Latinos. While many opponents of comprehensive immigration reform were careful to proclaim their respect for Hispanic immigrants who are in this country legally, a number of pundits trafficked in raw racial and ethnic politics, suggesting that “brown” “third-world” hordes were overwhelming and changing America.

A classic of this genre is former Rep. Tom Tancredo’s November 2006 comments about Miami, Florida:

Look at what has happened to Miami. It has become a Third World country.... You would never know you’re in the United States of America. You would certainly say you’re in a Third World country.”

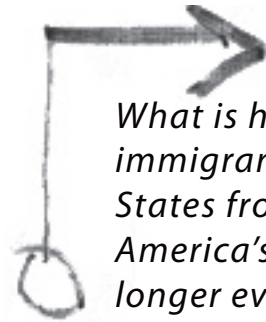
Right-wing columnist Don Feder, writing in Front Page Magazine in April 2007, called compromise legislation being considered by the Senate “a rape of our national identity” and said that the children and grandchildren of the “criminal aliens” who would be granted “amnesty” by the bill “won’t assimilate but be a solvent, eroding our identify as a people, year after year, decade after decade – until eventually, America comes to be comprised of disparate national groups residing in what used to be a nation.”

CLAIMS THAT AMERICA HAS BEEN BUILT BY AND FOR WHITE PEOPLE ARE NOT ONLY HISTORICALLY INACCURATE, THEY ALSO VIOLATE BASIC AMERICAN VALUES AND PRINCIPLES OF DECENCY.

An anti-immigrant leader in Georgia, D.A. King, wrote in a 2004 article, “Must the United States silently suffer the incursion of one million people a year because they are brown?” A leader of Mothers Against Illegal Aliens cited in the ADL report argues “we’re in America, and we’re not supposed to be diverse. We’re one nation.”

In May 2006, pundit John Gibson warned viewers of his Fox News program that “the greatest number [of children under five] are Hispanic. You know what that means? Twenty-five years and the majority of the population is Hispanic.” He urged viewers to do their “duty” and “make more babies.”

Pundit and former presidential candidate Pat Buchanan has been one of the loudest voices in this regard, writing in May 2007:



What is happening to us? An immigrant invasion of the United States from the Third World, as America’s white majority is no longer even reproducing itself.

-Pat Buchanan

What is happening to us? An immigrant invasion of the United States from the Third World, as America’s white majority is no longer even reproducing itself. Since Roe v. Wade, America has aborted 45 million of her children. And Asia, Africa and Latin America have sent 45 million of their children to inherit the estate that aborted American children never saw. God is not mocked.

And white America is in flight.

Also in 2007 Buchanan published a book warning that America is committing suicide because the “majority” is “not reproducing itself” and warning that “white folks” are now a minority in Texas and New Mexico.

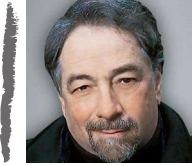
Response to Inflaming Racial Fears

America’s history has been shaped by generations of immigrants who came here to seek a better life and who have helped to build this country. Many Americans would be surprised to know that the kind of fear-mongering rhetoric heard above was heard a century ago regarding “mongrels” from eastern and southern European countries, who were decried as “invasive species” threatening to replace “Nordic” or “Teutonic” Americans.

Claims that America has been built by and for white people, whether from David Duke or Pat Robertson, are not only historically inaccurate, they also violate basic American values and principles of decency. Politicians who encourage or repeat those kinds of divisive racial claims do not deserve to be treated as if their opinions merit respect. They should be

forcefully challenged.

America today is undoubtedly a more diverse country, racially and ethnically, than it was a century ago. Some people fear that diversity, and some obviously are willing to exploit those fears. But in a world in which economics and culture cross borders freely, America's diversity is a strength, not a weakness.



MICHAEL SAVAGE CALLED THE NCLR "THE KU KLUX KLAN OF HISPANIC PEOPLE"

STRATEGY 2: Appeal to Racial Resentment by Portraying Immigrant Rights Advocates as Racists

A corollary strategy to stoking fears among non-Latino

Americans that "their country" is being taken away from them is to accuse immigrant rights advocates and Latino leaders of being racists. This is similar to the way right-wing leaders have worked to inflame racial resentment among white working class voters by saying, as Glenn Beck did, that President Obama has a "deep-seated hatred" of white people and "white culture" and that Supreme Court Justice Sonia Sotomayor was an anti-white racist whose career was devoted to denying equal justice and opportunity to white men. In April 2009, for example, Rep. Steve King denounced the Congressional Black Caucus and Congressional Hispanic Caucus as "separatist" organizations.

During the last major push for immigration reform, accusations of racism against Latino leaders and immigrant advocates flew fast and furious. In March 2006 right-wing pundit Michele Malkin called L.A. Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa and Lt. Gov. Cruz Bustamante "Latino supremacists" and described the protests against the 2006 GOP House bill as "militant racism" marked by

REFORM ATTRACTS GROWING RELIGIOUS SUPPORT - AND RESISTANCE

Many conservative Christian leaders have vehemently opposed Obama administration initiatives and denounced the administration as a threat to religious liberty and democracy itself. But when it comes to comprehensive immigration reform, religious community support has expanded from traditional supporters like the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops and progressive religious organizations to include more conservative religious groups and evangelical leaders, such as the National Association of Evangelicals. Among the key players is Latino evangelical leader Sam Rodriguez, who joins Religious Right leaders in denouncing legal abortion and marriage equality, but who has pushed hard to challenge anti-immigrant sentiment among some conservative white evangelicals.

A few years ago, right-wing judicial activist Manuel Miranda tried gathering some Religious Right support for a proposal that would back a path to citizenship for undocumented immigrants as long as it was "balanced" with a constitutional change that would deny citizenship to children born in the U.S. to non-citizen parents, so-called "anchor babies." Religious Right leaders Harry Jackson and Tony Perkins also

call for a change in constitutional interpretation on citizenship in their 2008 book, which encourages churches to meet immigrants' immediate human needs but to then insist that immigrants get right with the law. Jackson recounts that a member of his church was denied a leadership position based

SAM RODRIGUEZ REGULARLY JOINS RELIGIOUS RIGHT LEADERS, BUT HAS EXPRESSED DISMAY AT ANTI-IMMIGRANT SENTIMENT AMONG CONSERVATIVE WHITE EVANGELICALS.



on his unauthorized legal status.

The Miranda effort basically fizzled in the heat of GOP politicking during 2008, when we also saw Sen. John McCain abandon his previous support for comprehensive reform and embrace the "enforcement first" close-the-borders crowd. Richard Viguerie threatened at the time to work for the defeat of any GOPer who didn't take a hard line on "amnesty." Other intra-Right disputes during the 2008 election cycle included the endorsement of Mike Huckabee by Minuteman founder Jim Gilchrist, which infuriated other Minuteman-type activists who thought Huckabee was too soft on im-

“virulent anti-American hatred.”

Anti-reformers have also smeared the National Council of La Raza, the nation’s largest Hispanic civil rights organization. In 2006 and 2007, NCLR was attacked by right-wing pundits and politicians, including radio host Michael Savage, who called NCLR “the Ku Klux Klan of the Hispanic people” and said it was “the most stone racist group I’ve ever seen in this country.”

There are signs that the attacks on NCLR will return as debate over immigration policies heats up. In December 2009, Media Matters reported that right-wing pundit Ben Shapiro had attacked NCLR, calling it a “quasi-criminal group” and comparing it to the group the far right loves to hate, saying that many of NCLR’s chapters “run like local ACORN offices.”

Response to Racial Resentment Strategy of Portraying Latino Leaders as Racists

Pundits and politicians who foment racial resentment by

migration. Huckabee himself moved to the Right during his presidential bid, signing a “no amnesty” pledge, though he has also been part of the recent efforts to find a role for conservative religious voices in the immigration debate that will meet the movement’s long-term political goals.

The current embrace of comprehensive immigration reform by some evangelical leaders has run into resistance from anti-immigration zealots. NumbersUSA has said it has encouraged its evangelical members to “hammer” denominations that have embraced comprehensive reform. The Center for Immigration Studies’ Mark Krikorian has denounced religious support as “cherry-picking Bible quotes to support the National Council of La Raza’s policy positions” and promoted opposing religious voices. Phyllis Schlafly’s Eagle Forum is dead-set against any reform that would allow unauthorized immigrants an opportunity to work toward citizenship. And many of the leading congressional hard-liners on immigration have close ties to Religious Right groups.

It is good news that National Association of Evangelicals and others are broadening religious community support for comprehensive immigration reform. But Religious Right leaders who want to back reform do so under the backdrop of a conservative political landscape where nativist groups have controlled the immigration narrative for years. Stay tuned. ■

[Supporters of the immigration reform bill] “want to flood the country with foreign nationals, unlimited, unlimited, to change the complexion” of our society.”

-Bill O’Reilly

portraying Latino leaders as racists (or similarly by portraying President Obama as an anti-white racist) are playing with fire. Fanning racial and ethnic tensions in an increasingly diverse nation is an inherently caustic strategy, one that threatens to leave communities divided and, even worse, to encourage the growth of violent extremism and hate crimes.

Many of the irresponsible charges of racism against NCLR and Latino public officials are grounded in the false notion discussed in the next section that these leaders espouse a “brown” racist nationalism and are seeking to return the western United States – “Aztlán” – to the control of Mexico. Much of this criticism comes from a misinterpretation of the term “la raza” to mean “the race” when in fact it refers to “the people” or “the community” and is identified in a number of dictionaries as referring broadly to Mexican-American or Spanish-speaking communities. In particular, some have accused NCLR of espousing a philosophy of “for the race everything, outside the race, nothing.” That language, from a 1960s student group document, has never been NCLR’s motto and has in fact been unequivocally repudiated by NCLR:

NCLR’s critics falsely claim that the statement “Por La Raza todo, Fuera de La Raza nada,” [“For the community everything, outside the community nothing”] is NCLR’s motto. NCLR unequivocally rejects this statement, which is not and has never been the motto of any Latino organization.

STRATEGY 3:

Portray Immigrants and Their Supporters as Invaders, Conquerors, Enemies of the U.S.

Another line of attack against immigrants and their advocates is the claim that U.S. sovereignty over the southwestern United States is threatened by a deliberate “reconquista” strategy being waged by the Mexican government and “illegal immigrants” to take back for Mexico land lost to the U.S. in the 19th Century. This line of attack puts Hispanic Americans, including elected officials, in the category of suspected enemies, along with anyone who supports immigration reform efforts.

The late Rep. Charles Norwood, writing in Human Events Online on April 7, 2006, warned that “The final plan for the La Raza movement includes the ethnic cleansing of Americans of European, African, and Asian descent” out of areas of the U.S. formerly under Mexican control. Norwood proposed a multiple-part loyalty oath for NCLR that he said the civil rights group must agree to in order to avoid being banned from testifying before Congress or getting federal funds. Norwood wrote that any group that agrees to his loyalty oath “should be welcomed into that fold...If not, the American people will know there’s a wolf in their midst and take the necessary precautions to defend our Republic against an enemy.”

Similar was this April 2006 assertion by director Ronald Maxwell (Gods and Generals, Gettysburg) in an open letter to then-President Bush published in the Washington Times:

“This is invasion masquerading as immigration. It may already be too late to avoid a future annexation of the Southwest by Mexico or the evolution of a Mexican-dominated satellite state.”

In May 2006, CNN correspondent Casey Wian, appearing on Lou Dobbs Tonight, called Mexican President Vicente Fox’s visit to Utah a “military incursion.” Also in 2006, Michele Malkin told Bill O’Reilly and his viewers that “the intellectual underpinnings of reconquista” – which she defined as the belief that “the American southwest belongs to Mexico – are “embraced by the vast majority of mainstream Hispanic politicians.” She responded to the May Day 2006 protests by writing that, “Reconquista is Real” and saying:

“The homegrown multiculti-mau-mau-ers know exactly what they believe, and they know exactly what they are doing. They aim to mainstream the “Stolen Land” mantra and pervert history. They aim to obliterate America’s borders by sheer demographic and political force.

And they are succeeding.”

RIGHT-WING ACTIVISTS HAVE ALSO PORTRAYED NON-LATINO SUPPORTERS OF REFORM AS ENEMIES OF U.S. SOVEREIGNTY.

Some right-wing activists also portrayed non-Latino supporters of reform as enemies of U.S. sovereignty:

- An American Conservative Union alert to its activists in April 2006 warns of “a growing number of left-wing America-hating radicals who are using the amnesty issue to drive a hate-filled agenda.”

CASEY WIAN CALLED MEXICAN PRESIDENT VICENTE FOX’S VISIT TO UTAH A “MILITARY INCURSION.”



- Pat Buchanan, in a May 31, 2006 WorldNetDaily column titled “The state at war with the nation,” wrote, “Our Enemy, the State’ is an exact description of a regime that seeks to convert into law a Senate amnesty for millions of illegal aliens....”
- In 2007, Bill O’Reilly said supporters of the immigration reform bill “hate America” and “want to flood the country with foreign nationals, unlimited, unlimited, to change the complexion” of our society.

In portraying American sovereignty at risk, these anti-immigrant leaders have allies in some traditional Religious Right leaders like the Eagle Forum’s Phyllis Schlafly, who has been warning activists for years that the U.S. government is preparing to sell out American sovereignty to a North American Union encompassing Mexico, Canada, and the U.S. At her How to Take Back America Conference this spring, Schlafly welcomed anti-immigrant activist and GOP official Kris Kobach to lead a workshop on illegal immigration.

Response to Fearmongering about U.S. Sovereignty

It is a historical fact that much of the land in the Southwest was taken from Mexico in the 1840s, and it is true that some protestors pushing back against anti-Latino sentiment during recent debates have used rhetoric of the “we were here first” variety. But it is sheer McCarthyism for anyone to suggest, as Michele Malkin did, that the “vast majority” of mainstream Hispanic elected officials believe the southwestern United States belongs to Mexico and are therefore represent threats to national sovereignty. National organizations representing Hispanic Americans, such as NCLR, are working hard to help Latinos achieve the American dream, not repudiate it.

There is no evidence that the growing Latino population in the U.S. – most of that growth, by the way, is from births, not immigration – is not interested in the responsibilities of citizenship. Latinos work hard, pay taxes, and contribute to their

communities. Latino citizens are the fastest-growing part of the U.S. electorate, and advocates are actively working to pass immigration reforms that will include a path for unauthorized immigrants to earn American citizenship.

One frequent charge made by anti-immigrant voices to support their “reconquista” claims is that Hispanic immigrants are not interested in learning English. But that’s simply not true. According to the Pew Research Center, these immigrant families reflect the same trend as previous generations of immigrants: while new immigrants may struggle as they work to learn English, their children speak it fluently. According to Pew, “Nearly all Hispanic adults born in the United States of immigrant parents report they are fluent in English.” Pew also concludes:

As fluency in English increases across generations, so, too, does the regular use of English by Hispanics, both at home and at work. For most immigrants, English is not the primary language they use in either setting. But for their grown children, it is.

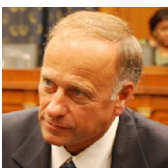
STRATEGY 4:

Portray Immigrants as Criminals and Terrorists

An important part of the far right’s anti-immigrant rhetorical tactics during previous immigration debates at both local and national levels was portraying undocumented immigrants as criminals responsible for new waves of crime (a persistent portrayal not backed up by crime statistics) or as potential terrorists. Rep. Steve King, for example, has called “illegal immigration” a “slow-motion Holocaust,” and a “slow-motion terrorist attack on the United States.”

A November 2005 fundraising letter from the American Conservative Union’s David Keene is typical:

“Thousands of people are sneaking across the US border every day. Who are they? Why do they come? What do they want? I can’t tell you that but I can tell you one irrefutable fact: each and every one of those people is a criminal...Why do these people come here? Some come to the US for the economic opportunities, for a chance at a better life. Others come with the intention to do us harm, planning terrorist attacks or planning a life of crime, such as drug dealing.”

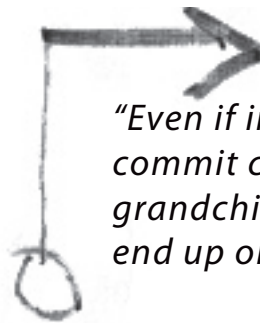


**REP. STEVE KING CALLED
‘ILLEGAL IMMIGRATION’ A “SLOW
MOTION TERRORIST ATTACK ON
THE UNITED STATES”**

Mark Krikorian, executive director of the Center for Immigration Studies, one of several groups treated by conservatives in Congress and the media as mainstream despite its ties to white supremacists (see sidebar), wrote on May 1, 2006 in National Review Online, that “the illegal alien marchers are morally identical to burglars demanding that the homeowner rearrange the furniture.”

In 2008, CIS research director Steven Camarota argued in Time magazine that “even if immigrants are less likely to commit crimes, their children and grandchildren may be more likely to end up on the wrong side of the law.”

Rep. Steve King, a leader of the House Republicans’ “Immigration Reform Caucus” used what he called



“Even if immigrants are less likely to commit crimes, their children and grandchildren may be more likely to end up on the wrong side of the law.”

-Steve Camrota

“extrapolation” to make up frightening albeit fictional statistics during the 2006 debate, such as one claiming that 12 American citizens “die a violent death at the hands of murderous illegal aliens each day.”

D.A. King, identified by the ADL as a founder and leader of a Georgia-based group opposed to the immigration of Hispanics, was reported by the Atlanta Journal-Constitution in April 2007 to have told a Newton County Republican Party meeting that undocumented immigrants are “not here to mow your lawn – they’re here to blow up your buildings and kill your children, and you, and me.”

Response to Fearmongering About Crime and Terrorism

Claims by anti-immigrant activists and some local officials that unauthorized immigrants are responsible for crime waves are anecdotal at best, and are refuted by crime statistics. A debunking of Steven Camarota’s claims by MALDEF noted:

The President’s Council of Economic Advisors, for example, reports that immigrants have lower crime rates than U.S. natives and that immigrant men ages 18 to 40 are less likely than other

U.S. residents to be incarcerated. The Council found that “[t]he direct evidence on crime rates shows that localities that receive large numbers of immigrants do not experience increases in relative crime rates.” Moreover, a Public Policy Institute of California study concluded that among men ages 18-40 – the age group most likely to commit crimes – those born in the U.S. were 10 times more likely than immigrants to be incarcerated...

Mr. Camarota, in endorsing immigration restrictions based upon the imagined future activities of immigrants’ children and grandchildren, adopts a revealing approach in his anti-immigrant rhetoric. In doing so, he makes clear that immigration policy is not, in fact, his primary concern or that of his organization; race-based stereotyping and anti-Hispanic hatred are.

STRATEGY 5:

Portray Immigrants as Carriers of Disease and Weapons of Bio-Terrorism

CLAIMS BY ANTI-IMMIGRANT ACTIVISTS THAT UNAUTHORIZED IMMIGRANTS ARE RESPONSIBLE FOR CRIME WAVES ARE ANECDOTAL AT BEST.

Portraying Mexican immigrants as unclean and unsafe has a long history in the United States; a recent Smithsonian exhibit on the Bracero migrant-worker program during World War II showed workers being doused in DDT at the border. Before Lou Dobbs left CNN on a wave of controversy over his anti-immigrant grandstanding, he suggested that immigrants from Mexico were responsible for an epidemic of leprosy in America, a claim he did not withdraw even after those claims had been thoroughly debunked.

ADL’s 2008 report points to this gem from the Mothers Against Illegal Aliens website from November 2007:

The next time you eat in a restaurant or sleep in a hotel or motel...just remember to bring your own food, dishes, utensils [sic], glasses, towels, and maybe your own water. The person who cooked your meal or made your bed

may very well be the one who picked your fruit and vegetables, yesterday...and we’ve heard the stories about what they do in the fields...haven’t we?

More recently, right-wing radio host Michael Savage was one of many to use the 2009 swine flu scare to drum up fear against immigrants, telling his listeners “illegal aliens are carriers...this is a disaster.” Savage also suggested that the flu might be a terrorist concoction planted in Mexicans as a way of delivering it to the U.S. He wasn’t the only one peddling that flu-as-weapon theory.

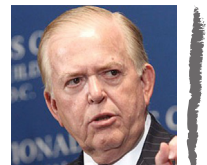
Response to Portraying Immigrants as Disease Carriers and Weapons of Biowarfare

Claims that immigrants are causing an epidemic of leprosy (thank you, Lou Dobbs) and other diseases is simply not true. And there is no evidence whatsoever to support the speculation by some right-wing pundits that the H1N1 flu was created by terrorists and implanted in immigrants from Mexico as a weapon of biological warfare. Spreading that kind of baseless and inflammatory speculation indicates that the speaker is not interested in serious policy debate, but is simply denigrating immigrants in order to make punitive policies more palatable to the American public, which is still inclined to support comprehensive reform. As journalist Edward Schumacher-Matos wrote in a May 2009 op ed:

Demonization of Mexican and other Latino immigrants is fueling hate crimes and violence against them, and it’s time for America’s leaders and media to put a stop to it all.

The swine-flu scapegoating of Mexicans over the past two weeks by some radio and television talk show hosts reflects the abandon with which many local officials, anti-immigrant groups and even an unthinking mainstream media create popular resentments, dehumanize immigrants and provide justification for the extremists among us to act violently.

LOU DOBBS SUGGESTED THAT MEXICAN IMMIGRANTS WERE RESPONSIBLE FOR AN EPIDEMIC OF LEPROSY IN AMERICA.



STRATEGY 6:

Stop Reform by Shouting ‘Amnesty’

Opponents of any legislation that would provide an earned

A CRASS CALCULUS



PAT BUCHANAN MAKES HIS POLITICAL CALCULUS CLEAR:

The last major debate on comprehensive immigration reform exposed serious divisions within the Republican Party and its supporters. Some argued that the Party needed to take a hard line against any reform that looked like “amnesty.” Others worried that the inflammatory rhetoric used by some right-wing pundits and politicians could turn Latinos, the fastest-growing group in America, against the Republican Party for a generation.

We saw some of the same dynamic during the debate over the nomination of Sonia Sotomayor to the Supreme Court, when right-wing pundits and Republican senators offended many Americans with their over-the-top attacks on Sotomayor. During that debate, Pat Buchanan made his political calculus clear:

The imperative of the GOP is not to appease a city that went 93-7 for Obama, but to win back its lost voters.

In 2008, Hispanics, according to the latest figures, were 7.4 percent of the total vote. White folks were 74 percent, 10 times as large. Adding just 1 percent to the white vote is thus the same as adding 10 percent to the candidate's Hispanic vote.

If John McCain, instead of getting 55 percent of the white vote, got the 58 percent George W. Bush got in 2004, that would have had the same impact

as lifting his share of the Hispanic vote from 32 percent to 62 percent.

But even Ronald Reagan never got over 44 percent of the Hispanic vote. Yet, he and Richard Nixon both got around 65 percent of the white vote.

When Republican identification is down to 20 percent, but 40 percent of Americans identify themselves as conservatives, do Republicans need a GPS to tell them which way to go?

Why did McCain fail to win the white conservative Democrats Hillary Clinton swept in the primaries? He never addressed or cared about their issues.

These are the folks whose jobs have been outsourced to China and Asia, who pay the price of affirmative action when their sons and daughters are pushed aside to make room for the Sonia Sotomayors. These are the folks who want the borders secured and the illegals sent back.... ■

path to citizenship grabbed onto the word “amnesty” and plastered it even on legislation that required fines and significant other requirements for law-abiding immigrants to earn a path to citizenship. Decrying “amnesty” became a way to oppose any reform short of mass deportation without saying so directly, and we should expect “no amnesty” to be a rallying cry of those who oppose any responsible approach to reform. Indeed, Pat Buchanan has written, “Comprehensive’ is the code word for amnesty.” He has insisted that “America is now risking national suicide... if a path to citizenship becomes law, nothing will stop the next invasion.”

In early 2007, some Republicans waged a campaign to try to keep then-Sen. Mel Martinez of Florida from becoming chairman of the GOP based on his support for comprehensive reform. The anti-Martinez organizing led RNC member Paul

Senft to complain, “With some people, the issue of amnesty is a litmus test and anything short of a concentration camp is amnesty.”

In 2007, as the 2008 presidential primary campaigns were getting under way, Politico said, “Political pandering was at a peak during a recent Republican presidential forum in New Hampshire. Most of the 10 GOP White House hopefuls blasted the Senate bill as ‘amnesty,’ even though it calls for a steep path to legalization for most of the 21 million illegal immigrants.”

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THE *Right Wing*

PLAYBOOK ON IMMIGRATION

1

Inflate Racial Fears



Pat Buchanan

"What is happening to us? An immigrant invasion of the United States from the Third World, as America's white majority is no longer even reproducing itself."



Don Feder

[Comprehensive immigration reform legislation is], "a rape of our national identity"



D.A. King

"Must the United States silently suffer the incursion of one million people a year because they are brown?"

2

Portray Latino Leaders as Racists



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3

Portray Immigrants as



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6

Stop Reform by Shouting 'Amnesty'



Pat Buchanan

"'Comprehensive' [immigration reform] is the code word for amnesty."



New Hampshire GOP Forum

At a 2007 GOP presidential forum in New Hampshire, most of the 10 GOP White House hopefuls blasted the Senate bill as 'amnesty,' even though it called for a steep path to legalization.

7

Denigrate Reform Efforts as Vote-Buying



Rick Scarborough

"The Democrats know it's to their advantage to bring in Third World hordes who will one day become Democratic voters."



Rep. Steve King

[Immigration reform is about] "trying to create a permanent dependency class so it will permanently vote for Democrats."



Minuteman HQ.com

"The new bill is designed to lure more Hispanic votes, casting aside the concerns of law-abiding Americans working hard day after day to live according to the rule of law."

MIGRATION REFORM

3

Portray Immigrants as Invaders

and Mexican President Vicente Fox's visit to Utah a "military invasion."

is invasion masquerading as immigration."

porters of the immigration reform bill] "want to flood the country with foreign nationals, unlimited, unregulated, to change the complexion" of our society."

4

Portray Immigrants as Criminals



D.A. King



David Keene



Rep. Steve King

[Undocumented immigrants] are "not here to mow your lawn – they're here to blow up your buildings and kill your children, and you, and me." [Some immigrants come to the U.S.] "with the intention to do us harm, planning terrorist attacks or planning a life of crime, such as drug dealing."

Called "illegal immigration" a "slow-motion Holocaust," and a "slow-motion terrorist attack on the United States."

5

Portray Immigrants as Disease Carriers



Lou Dobbs



MAIA



Michael Savage

Claimed immigrants from Mexico were responsible for an epidemic of leprosy in America.

"The person who cooked your meal or made your bed may very well be the one who picked your fruit and vegetables, yesterdayand we've heard the stories about what they do in the fields....haven't we?"

"Illegal aliens are carriers [of swine flu]...this is a disaster."

8

'Anti-Immigrant = Pro-Worker'



Rep. Lamar Smith



Rep. Joe Wilson



Former Rep. Virgil Goode

"If they were not in the country, we wouldn't have to worry about emergency room or health insurance costs at all. And Americans would have these jobs."

Shouted "you lie" when President Obama said in a congressional address that the health care reform legislation wouldn't make benefits available to unauthorized immigrants.

Urged President Obama to recover jobs "stolen by unauthorized immigrants"

9

Push Divisive Black-Brown Wedge



Ted Hayes



Mark Krikorian

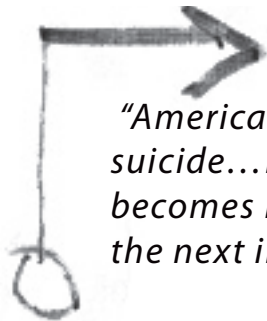


Crispus Attucks Brigade

Called 'illegal immigration' the "greatest threat to black people since slavery."

"To be blunt a lot of employers would rather not deal with black American workers if they have the option of hiring a docile Hispanic immigrant instead."

Calls 'illegal immigration' "deliberate economic warfare on all United States American citizens, especially American Black peoples."



"America is now risking national suicide...if a path to citizenship becomes law, nothing will stop the next invasion."

-Pat Buchanan

Response to Denunciations of 'Amnesty'

When pundits or political leaders try, as a number of elected officials and Religious Right leaders have done, to come across as reasonable while obstructing reform, they may say something like, "I support reform, but I can't support amnesty." They should be asked to define "amnesty." If they define it as rewarding lawbreaking, ask them whether it is fair to apply such a sweeping term to a system that would require unauthorized immigrants to pay a fine, learn English, and spend time earning their way toward citizenship. If they call even a policy like that "amnesty," they will be unmasked as obstructionists who are more interested in demagoguery than in finding workable solutions to the question of how to deal with millions of unauthorized immigrants now living and working in our communities. Most Americans understand that mass deportations are not a workable solution; politicians who support that kind of extreme measure shouldn't be permitted to portray themselves as proponents of reform while waving a "no amnesty" banner.

STRATEGY 7:

Denigrate Reform Efforts as Vote-Buying

Several right-wing leaders have suggested that Democratic supporters of comprehensive immigration reform are selling out the national interest in order to win votes from the growing Latino community. Said Texas-based Religious Right figure Rick Scarborough in 2007, "The Democrats know it's to their advantage to bring in Third World hordes who will one day become Democratic voters."

In a similar vein, a March 2007 Minuteman HQ.com alert about Kennedy-McCain legislation included this language: "The new bill is designed to lure more Hispanic votes, casting aside the concerns of law-abiding Americans working hard day after day to live according to the rule of law."

More recently, Rep. Steve King responded to the introduction of Rep. Luis Gutierrez's Comprehensive Immigration Reform for America's Security and Prosperity legislation this way:

This isn't about America's prosperity. This is about expanding the dependency class in America, trying to create a permanent dependency class so it will permanently vote for Democrats so they can be permanently in power, permanently undermining our liberty, our free enterprise system, and our Constitution and the rule of law itself. That's what this is about; it isn't about helping people, and I think Gutierrez knows that."

Response to Allegations of Partisan Vote-Buying

Bogus claims that support for comprehensive immigration reform is just about buying Hispanic votes for Democrats are exposed as false by the fact that the most recent push for reform was supported by then-President Bush and then-Senator John McCain, who would become the GOP presidential nominee in 2008. Immigration reform legislation passed the Senate in May 2006 with a bipartisan 62-36 majority; Senate compromise legislation in 2007 failed to muster the 60 votes to end debate, with senators from both parties split on allowing a final vote on the legislation, which the New York Times called a "cornerstone" of President Bush's domestic agenda.

While some GOP strategists and Religious Right leaders (see sidebar) are worried about the long-term impact of

SEVERAL RIGHT-WING LEADERS
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LATINO COMMUNITY.

conservative anti-immigrant rhetoric alienating American Latinos, the fastest-growing ethnic group in America, it is right-wing pundits who are making crass political calculations that they can make short-term political gains by using racially inflammatory rhetoric around immigration to win votes from white working class voters. (See sidebar). The current economic challenges will make those divisive tactics more tempting, with anti-immigrant sentiments being dressed up in pro-worker rhetoric.

STRATEGY 8:

Portray Anti-Immigrant Stance as 'Pro-Worker'

(While Voting Against Worker Interests)

The huge job losses in the American economy over the past couple of years and the real suffering being experienced by millions of families create an atmosphere that is ripe for anti-immigrant demagoguery. Some anti-immigrant activists will push this as part of the angry right-wing faux-populism that they have fostered in the health care debate. Immigration reform, we will be told, is being pushed by Democrats who want to buy Latino votes and by big-business Republicans who want to provide companies with a supply of cheap labor.

It is clear that the party's "tea party" wing will be happy to politicize immigration reform and try to pit American workers against immigrants. Consider Rep. Joe Wilson's folk-hero status on the Right after he shouted "you lie" when President Obama said in a congressional address that the health care reform legislation would not make benefits available to unauthorized immigrants.

Rep. Lamar Smith of Texas, who has written that the Bible supports border-focused immigration policy, exemplifies Republican readiness to use both jobs and health care to stir anti-reform sentiment. Here's Rep. Smith in the Washington Times on November 20, 2009:

"If it was not bad enough that illegal immigrants take jobs that rightfully belong to citizens and legal immigrants, now they will get health care benefits that should go to Americans," said Rep. Lamar Smith of Texas, the top Republican on the House Judiciary Committee. "If they were not in the country, we wouldn't have to worry about emergency room or health insurance costs at all. And Americans would have these jobs."

Smith has plenty of company. Last fall a dozen Republican U.S. Senators wrote to Department of Homeland Security Secretary Janet Napolitano to complain about the

IT IS CLEAR THAT THE GOP'S "TEA PARTY" WING WILL BE HAPPY TO POLITICIZE IMMIGRATION REFORM AND TRY TO PIT AMERICAN WORKERS AGAINST IMMIGRANTS.

administration's intentions to move immigration reform, saying "we strongly encourage you to cease any discussion about enacting a legalization program that will only hurt US workers and make it harder for law abiding citizens to weather this economic downturn."

Republican House members have also gotten into the act with a letter to President Obama, which includes this:

American jobs continue to disappear at a staggering rate, and 15.1 million Americans are now out of work. At the same time, according to the most recent estimates from the Pew Hispanic Center, seven million jobs are held by illegal immigrants. Any action your administration takes to prevent

FORMER REP. VIRGIL GOODE URGED THE PRESIDENT TO RECOVER JOBS "STOLEN BY UNAUTHORIZED IMMIGRANTS"



illegal immigrants from getting jobs will help ensure that an American has a job.

Former GOP Rep. Virgil Goode writing in Town Hall in December, called for a moratorium on all immigration, saying "It is pure madness to continue to keep flooding our country with millions of foreign workers when our own citizens cannot find jobs." He urged the president to recover jobs "stolen by unauthorized immigrants."

Pat Buchanan is of course more than willing to stoke this fire, saying that white working class voters "watch on cable TV as illegal aliens walk into their country, are rewarded with free educations and health care, and take jobs at lower pay than Americans can live on – then carry Mexican flags in American cities and demand citizenship.

Of course, when anti-immigrant voices aren't accusing immigrant workers of stealing jobs, they're accusing them of coming here not to work. An alert from the Center for Individual Freedom in 2007 said that "while we can not dispute that some of them are hardworking people looking for a better life, far too many have come to freeloader."

Response to 'Anti-Immigrant = Pro-Worker' Argument

It's not a simple task to measure the exact economic impact of undocumented immigrants, but there is a lot of evidence that immigration is good for the American economy and American workers.

Two reports from confirm that immigration benefits

Continued on page 16

ANTI-IMMIGRANT GROUPS' LINKS TO WHITE SUPREMACISTS AND OTHER HATE GROUPS

Opposition to immigration and immigration reform efforts, and the visibility and “respectability” given to overtly anti-immigrant rhetoric in mainstream media, has been good business for white supremacists and other right-wing hate groups.

An October 2008 story in USA Today examined the ways in which the “white-power movement is changing its marketing strategy to broaden its appeal.” The article quotes neo-Nazi leaders saying that the economic downturn and the most recent debates about immigration were good for recruiting. Here’s the head of the nation’s largest neo-Nazi group speaking:

“Historically, when times get tough in our nation, that’s how movements like ours gain a foothold,” he says, “When the economy suffers, people are looking for answers....We are the answer for white people.”

“And now this immigrant thing in the past couple of years has been the biggest boon to us,” [he] says. “The immigration issue is the biggest problem we’re facing because it’s changing the face of our country. We see stuff in English and Spanish....They are turning our country into a Third World ghetto.”



JOHN TANTON CREATED A SERIES OF ANTI-IMMIGRATION GROUPS GIVEN MAINSTREAM RESPECTABILITY IN MEDIA AND CONGRESS.

Not surprisingly, anti-immigrant commentary by pundits like Pat Buchanan shows up on websites that traffic in “white nationalist” commentary. The Anti-Defamation League has documented that white supremacist groups have encouraged members to support the efforts of supposedly mainstream groups like ALI-PAC, Americans for Legal Immigration Political Action Committee.

Buchanan’s own American Cause conference last summer brought a mix of Religious Right and conservative

political leaders together with people like anti-immigrant author Peter Brimelow, who said after the 2008 elections that Republicans should focus on winning white voters and predicted that Obama will do something “that will start to shock people right away. I think that whites — that is to say, Americans — will organize. ... I think immigration will become an issue and it will become an important part of that organization process.”

Of course not all opponents of comprehensive immigration reform are racists or white supremacists. But in fact there is not much difference between the above-quoted rhetoric from the far fringe and what is heard regularly from anti-immigrant cable news pundits with columns in right-wing publications

And many of the groups that provide newspaper and television commentary, and congressional testimony, have their own troubling origins and connections to “white nationalists.”

The Federation for American Immigration Reform, the Center for Immigration Studies, and NumbersUSA — respectively a lobbying group, a think tank, and a grassroots organizing vehicle — are all, in the words of the Southern Poverty Law Center, “fruits of the same poisonous tree.”

All were created by John Tanton, a man with “deep racist roots,” who has been “at the heart of the white nationalist scene.”

“Together, FAIR, CIS, and Numbers USA form the core of the nativist lobby in America. In 2007, they were key players in derailing bipartisan, comprehensive immigration reform that had been

expected by many observers to pass. Today, these organizations are frequently treated as if they were legitimate, mainstream commentators on immigration. But the truth is that they were all conceived and birthed by a man who sees America under threat by non-white immigrants. And they have never strayed from their roots.”

Tanton says such criticism is unfair, and describes himself as an environmentalist, but his record and rhetoric is

well-documented. He has repeatedly described contemporary immigrants as inferior. He has questioned the “educability” of Latinos and in a letter to Roy Beck, head of NumbersUSA, he wondered “whether the minorities who are going to inherit California ... can run an advanced society?”

Tanton is also the publisher of Social Contract Press, whose editor is Wayne Lutton, who the Rocky Mountain News reported has been on the advisory board of the segregationist Council of Conservative Citizens. (It’s worth noting that even then-Republican National Committee Chair Jim Nicholson called the CCC racist in 1999 and urged Republicans to quit the group.) Lutton has “written articles for the Journal of Historical Re-

Taylor, an unabashed white nationalist who this month announced the February 2010 conference with fanfare that concluded this way:

Perhaps it is because we have a black president, or perhaps because immigration is now spreading from the coasts to every part of the country, but unprecedented numbers of whites are coming out of their coma and beginning to realize where our country is heading. The result is energy, ideas, activism, and commitment on a far greater scale than at any time in the 20 years since American Renaissance began publishing.

These are still very dark times in America. But

FAIR, CIS, AND NUMBERSUSA

FORM THE CORE OF THE



NATIVIST LOBBY IN AMERICA



view, published by the Holocaust-denial group Institute for Historical Review, though according to the SPLC, Lutton’s articles haven’t dealt with Holocaust denial, but with other World War II issues.

Social Contract produces a journal that promotes racialist writers and publishes and promotes books opposing immigration, such as *America Extinguished: Mass Immigration and the Disintegration of American Culture*, by the late Samuel Francis. Francis was fired from the Washington Times in 1995 after appearing at an American Renaissance conference and giving a speech denouncing miscegenation, decrying a “war against the white race” and insisting that whites must “reassert our identity and our solidarity, and we must do so in explicitly racial terms through the articulation of a racial consciousness as whites.”

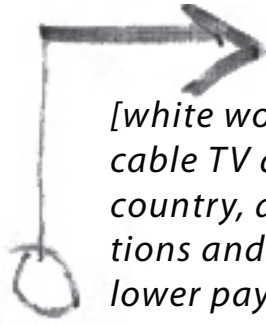
Lutton has also spoken at an American Renaissance conference, organized by American Renaissance editor Jared

the movement to speak out in the name of our nation’s founding stock—to put our house back in order—is building up to critical mass. It helps, of course, that we have history, morality, and human nature all on our side.

Defenders of Tanton and the networks he has created must contend with a record that includes quotes like these from Tanton’s writings:

“As whites see their power and control over their lives declining, will they simply go quietly into the night? Or will there be an explosion?”

“For European-American society and culture to persist requires a European-American majority, and a clear one at that.” ■



[white working class voters] “watch on cable TV as illegal aliens walk into their country, are rewarded with free educations and health care, and take jobs at lower pay than Americans can live on.”

-Pat Buchanan

the American economy, and that immigration reform would boost the nation's economic prospects. “Raising the Floor for American Workers: The Economic Benefits of Comprehensive Immigration Reform,” written by UCLA's Dr. Raul Hinojosa-Ojeda and published by the Center for American Progress and the Immigration Policy Center, says comprehensive immigration reform that includes a legalization program for unauthorized immigrants and enables a future flow of legal workers would greatly benefit the American economy – to the tune of \$1.5 trillion in added U.S. gross domestic product over 10 years. The report found that a deportation-only policy would result in a loss of \$2.6 trillion in GDP over 10 years.

An August 2009 report by the conservative-libertarian Cato Institute also found that an emphasis on enforcement and reduction of immigration would “have a significant negative impact on the income of U.S. households.” Specifically, the report states, “A policy that reduces the number of low-skilled immigrant workers by 28.6 percent compared to projected levels would reduce U.S. household welfare by about 0.5 percent, or \$80 billion.” In contrast, says the Cato report, legalization of low-skilled immigrant workers “would yield significant income gains for American workers and households.”

An economic analysis published by the Immigration Policy Center in 2009 noted that as of 2008, “immigrants who arrived during the last decade were only 5.5 percent of the U.S. workforce.” The report found that “there is little apparent relationship between recent immigration and unemployment rates at the regional, state, or county level.” It's worth noting that according to the Wall Street Journal, the current recession has hit foreign-born workers harder than native-born workers; immigrants currently have a higher unemployment rate than Americans in general.

There have been some reports suggesting that under the current system unauthorized immigrants may have an impact on the wages of lower-paid Americans, which is one reason that organized labor unions are supporting comprehensive

immigration reform. Undocumented workers without any legal protections are subject to exploitation by employers and therefore less likely to advocate for fair wages or to report abusive working environments. Moving those workers out of the shadows while establishing more effective controls on immigration are among the priorities of American labor unions that are supporting comprehensive immigration reform.

Meanwhile, a look at the voting records of those members of Congress crying crocodile tears over the supposed impact of immigrants on the well-being of American workers makes it clear that hard-line anti-immigrant members of Congress have appallingly anti-worker voting records in Congress. A December 2009 study by America's Voice Education Fund makes the facts clear:

Of the 87 House members who got an “A” from anti-immigration group FAIR:

- 68% voted against increasing the minimum wage
- 83% voted against extending unemployment compensation
- 93% voting against equal pay for women
- 94% voted against the Employee Free Choice Act

**THOSE MEMBERS OF CONGRESS
CRYING CROCODILE TEARS
OVER THE SUPPOSED IMPACT
OF IMMIGRANTS ON THE WELL-
BEING OF AMERICAN WORKERS
HAVE APPALLINGLY ANTI-WORKER
VOTING RECORDS IN CONGRESS.**

- 93% earned an F from the AFL-CIO
- 95% earned an F from SEIU

These Members of Congress are essentially arguing that more native-born Americans should take the most dangerous, low-paid, and potentially exploitative jobs – while voting against measures to make them safer and better paying. This pattern led Eliseo Medina of SEIU to say, “it's shameful to watch these members demonize immigrants while championing policies that are bad for workers at every level. It's like watching a fox

claim to be president of the chicken protection league.”

STRATEGY 9: Push Divisive Black-Brown Wedge

Anti-immigrant forces have long tried to use immigration as a wedge between Black and Latino communities, a political strategy to create divisions among progressive political leaders and activists. One element of the strategy is demonizing African American civil rights leaders and elected officials who have worked for passage of comprehensive reform. For example, in 2002, Dan Stein of FAIR accused black leaders of being “willing to sacrifice the interests of millions of African-Americans (and other Americans as well) whose jobs, incomes, education opportunities and access to social services are compromised by the more than one million new immigrants each year.”

In 2006, FAIR founded Choose Black America, a group designed to inflame anti-immigrant sentiment in African American communities. That group no longer appears active but it spawned the Crispus Attucks Brigade, led by Los Angeles activist Ted Hayes, which has formed coalitions with anti-immigrant Minutemen. Language on the Crispus Attucks Brigade website calls illegal immigration “Mexico’s and other nation invasion masquerading as immigration” and “deliberate economic warfare on all United States American citizens, especially American Black peoples.”

In May 2006, Hayes held a sparsely attended rally in D.C. and called illegal immigration “the greatest threat to black people since slavery.” After a Hayes-organized anti-immigration rally in Los Angeles that turned angry and tense, LA Times columnist Erin Aubry Kaplan decried the “messy, saddening, surreal mix of too many things, notably black nationalism

ANTI-IMMIGRANT FORCES HAVE LONG TRIED TO USE IMMIGRATION AS A WEDGE BETWEEN BLACK AND LATINO COMMUNITIES.

twisted into ‘my-country-right-or-wrong’ patriotism” but she also said she understood some black Americans’ “raw anger at being consistently at the bottom of the economic food chain” and feeling as if immigrants were being given greater consideration and opportunities. Kaplan also attended a 2007 symposium sponsored by the anti-immigrant Center for

Immigration Studies on “Black Americans and the Challenge of Immigration,” which drew a range of academics and others focused on issues of diminishing black political power and the impact of undocumented immigrants on jobs and wages for poor blacks.

There’s evidence that the widespread economic suffering will create new openings for those trying to push Black-Latino divisions. In February, Cord Jefferson posted on the popular African American website “the Root” an article titled “How Illegal Immigration Hurts Black America,” which anti-immigrant NumbersUSA happily promoted via twitter. Jefferson quoted Mark Krikorian from the anti-immigrant Center for Immigration Studies, who is happy to push the wedge: “To be blunt a lot of employers would rather not deal with black American workers if they have the option of hiring a docile Hispanic immigrant instead.” CIS has also recently touted a poll purporting to show that African Americans and other minorities support deportation of undocumented immigrants rather than a path to citizenship.

TED HAYES CALLED ‘ILLEGAL IMMIGRATION’ THE “GREATEST THREAT TO BLACK PEOPLE SINCE SLAVERY”



Response to Pushing a Black-Brown Wedge

Defeating efforts to widen Black-Latino divisions on immigration requires understanding and acknowledging the severe economic challenges facing African Americans, especially those facing young African Americans with limited education. It is true that unscrupulous employers take advantage of vulnerable undocumented immigrants to evade wage and safety laws in ways that hurt workers across the board. But that won’t be solved by demonizing immigrants; the solution is comprehensive reform that includes stronger workplace enforcement, the kind of reform being championed by organized labor, the Congressional Black Caucus, Congressional Hispanic Caucus, and others. As Tyler Moran, Policy Director at National Immigration Law Center, says: “Worksite enforcement must be part of comprehensive immigration reform. However, the real answer to ‘enforcement’ at the worksite is making sure all workers can exercise their labor rights, increasing enforcement of labor and employment laws, and closing the gaping loophole that allows immigration enforcement to trump labor law enforcement.”

James Johnson, writing on Imagine 2050 to challenge Cord Jefferson’s post on the Root, cited a Princeton University



THE CRISPUS ATTUCKS BRIGADE CALLS 'ILLEGAL IMMIGRATION' "DELIBERATE ECONOMIC WARFARE ON ALL UNITED STATES AMERICAN CITIZENS, ESPECIALLY AMERICAN BLACK PEOPLES."

study documenting that issues other than immigration are actually at the root of the unemployment problem for African Americans, which Johnson describes as “discriminatory hiring practices that lock Blacks out of jobs and advancement, poor educational systems that reduce employment opportunities, outsourcing of jobs historically held by Blacks to other countries, and labor laws that make it more difficult for workers to organize unions to help protect their wages and benefits.”

There are examples of on-the-ground coalition work resisting the wedge strategies: in San Francisco in 2008, Black and Latino carpenters teamed up to fight a divide-and-conquer strategies of a major construction company which sought to pit the groups against each other. In Mississippi, Black and Latino shipyard workers and their advocates organized to stop near-slavery conditions among Indian men who were brought to the U.S. in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina as an exploitable and vulnerable workforce.

In 2007, commentator Roland Martin noted the challenges of maintaining black-brown coalitions at the local level when the focus was on community leaders’ fighting for a shrinking “minority” slice of the pie in a time of diminished resources. Said Martin: “Blacks are not the enemy of Hispanics, and vice versa. The enemy is a lack of quality of education, being shut out of the economic levers, as well as poor health care.”

President Obama directly addressed the “black-brown divide” during his campaign, saying, “We have to stop letting those in power turn us against each other. No place do I see this more than in our immigration debate. I am tired of people using this as a political football. We need to solve this problem.”

GOP, Right Wing Gearing Up to Oppose Comprehensive Immigration Reform

During previous debates, anti-immigrant fervor was stoked not only by far-right pundits, but also by “mainstream” conservative think-tankers and some members of Congress who opposed reform efforts. Senate Minority Leader John Boehner, for example, called the 2007 Senate compromise legislation a “piece of shit bill.”

Since the election of President Barack Obama, congressional Republican leaders have made it

their overriding priority to obstruct his administration’s agenda. It is clear that they’re planning to take a similar approach to immigration reform, in part by exploiting the nation’s economic woes.

Opposition to comprehensive immigration

reform will be led in the House by members of the Immigration Reform Caucus, which was founded by former Rep. Tom Tancredo in his first term. Tancredo, who made a name for himself as an anti-immigrant zealot, handed the reigns to Rep. Brian Bilbray in 2007 when he decided to run for the GOP presidential nomination. Earlier in the decade, Bilbray had made hundreds of thousands of dollars as a lobbyist for FAIR, which the Southern Poverty Law Center considers an anti-immigrant hate group. As a member of Congress, Bilbray has repeatedly introduced legislation designed to restrict or redefine the 14th Amendment and withhold citizenship from children born in the U.S. to non-citizen parents.

In November, five House Republicans held a press conference with FAIR president Dan Stein, who denounced “loopholes” in health care legislation that he said would allow benefits to go to “illegal aliens.” Members of Congress also participated in FAIR’s “Hold Their Feet to the Fire” rallies in DC in 2007.

A report on the Immigration Reform Caucus by the Center for New Community concludes:

“The caucus’s extreme ideological agenda, long standing ties to anti-immigrant groups, and cohesion in a fractured House of Representatives makes it a noxious ingredient in the melting pot of America. It has drawn even well-intentioned immigration reform proposals down into an abyss of nativism and xenophobia. And as its proposals to overturn the Fourteenth Amendment gather enough cosponsors



“We have to stop letting those in power turn us against each other. No place do I see this more than in our immigration debate. I am tired of people using this as a political football. We need to solve this problem.”

-Barack Obama

to be taken seriously, it may wind up provoking a constitutional crisis of the most serious kind.

Decency in Debate

There is virtually unanimous agreement in Washington that the current immigration system is not working. The debate we are now entering into should be about how we try to fix the system.

Comprehensive reform is a major challenge: it must address how we police our borders to better control the flow of immigrants into America; how we design guest worker programs that meet our economic needs while protecting the interests of American and immigrant workers; and how we deal realistically and honorably with the millions of unauthorized immigrants in the U.S. who are currently contributing to the economic and cultural life of our country. There is room for plenty of legitimate debate over the contours and details of reform proposals.

But the nature of the debate itself will tell us a lot about

the state of American politics and culture, and whether our elected officials and other public figures will have the courage to stand up to those who will use the occasion to exploit difficult economic realities, fan ethnic and racial divisions, and lie about the impact of immigrants on American life.

People For the American Way Foundation calls on Americans to equip themselves with the facts about immigration and immigration reform, and to be vigilant in challenging public officials and pundits who spread fear and false information. Lou Dobbs' departure from CNN after turning his show into a seemingly full-time attack on undocumented immigrants is evidence that people raising their voices in opposition to falsehoods and intolerance can have an impact on public debate. ■

RESOURCES/LINKS

Anti-immigration groups are working to exploit the real suffering caused by the economic downturn by promoting the idea that immigrants are “stealing” American jobs, suppressing wages for American workers, and damaging the economy. These charges can inflame community tensions and lead people unwittingly into alliance with extremist groups promoting dangerous and profoundly un-American values.

You can help play an important role in fighting the spread of extremism by educating yourself and taking steps to rebut false arguments when they appear in the media or pop up in your local community.

Here are some resources to help:

- **America's Voice Online** gives you facts to debunk false claims about immigrants and their effect on the American economy:
<http://americasvoiceonline.org/facts/>
- A list of helpful resources, including fact sheets on the economic benefits of immigration:
http://www.immigrationpolicy.org/sites/default/files/docs/IPCs_Top_10_Resources_of_2009.pdf
- **We Can Stop the Hate**, a project of the National

Council of La Raza:
<http://www.wecanstopthehate.org/>

For more details on anti-immigrant extremism in our political life:

- **The State of Hate: Escalating Hate Violence Against Immigrants**, Leadership Conference on Civil Rights Education Fund, 2009:
<http://www.civilrights.org/publications/hatecrimes/escalating-violence.html>
- **Nativism in the House: A Report on the House Immigration Reform Caucus**, Center for New Community, 2007:
<http://www.buildingdemocracy.org/reports/HIRC.pdf>
- **The Nativist Lobby: Three Faces of Intolerance**, Southern Poverty Law Center, February 2009:
http://www.splcenter.org/intel/nativist_lobby.jsp
- **Media Matters** on anti-immigrant voices on media:
<http://mediamatters.org/search/tag/immigration>
- **Anti-Defamation League** resources on anti-immigrant extremism:
http://www.adl.org/civil_rights/immigration.asp

9 WAYS TO BLOCK IMMIGRATION REFORM

- **Strategy 1: Appeal to Racial Fear and the 'Brown' Threat to 'White' America**

While many opponents of comprehensive immigration reform were careful to proclaim their respect for Hispanic immigrants who are in this country legally, a number of pundits trafficked in raw racial and ethnic politics, suggesting that “brown” “third-world” hordes were overwhelming and changing America.

- **Strategy 2: Appeal to Racial Resentment by Portraying Immigrant Rights Advocates as Racists**

During the last major push for immigration reform, accusations of racism against Latino leaders and immigrant advocates flew fast and furious. In March 2006 right-wing pundit Michele Malkin called L.A. Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa and Lt. Gov. Cruz Bustamante “Latino supremacists.”

- **Strategy 3: Portray Immigrants and Their Supporters as Invaders, Conquerors, Enemies of the U.S.**

Another line of attack against immigrants and their advocates is the claim that U.S. sovereignty over the southwestern United States is threatened by a deliberate “reconquista” strategy being waged by the Mexican government and “illegal immigrants” to take back for Mexico land lost to the U.S. in the 19th Century.

- **Strategy 4: Portray Immigrants as Criminals and Terrorists**

An important part of the far right’s anti-immigrant rhetorical tactics during previous immigration debates at both local and national levels was portraying undocumented immigrants as criminals responsible for new waves of crime (a persistent portrayal not backed up by crime statistics) or as potential terrorists. We should expect more of the same.

- **Strategy 5: Portray Immigrants as Carriers of Disease and Weapons of Bio-Terrorism**

Before Lou Dobbs left CNN on a wave of controversy over his anti-immigrant grandstanding, he suggested that immigrants from Mexico were responsible for an epidemic of leprosy in America, a claim he did not withdraw even after those claims had been thoroughly debunked. More recently, right-wing radio host Michael Savage was one of many to use the 2009 swine flu scare to drum up fear against immigrants, telling his listeners “illegal aliens are carriers...this is a disaster.”

- **Strategy 6: Stop Reform by Shouting ‘Amnesty’**

During the last push for immigration reform, decrying “amnesty” became a way to oppose any reform short of mass deportation without saying so directly. Expect “no amnesty” to be a rallying cry of those who oppose any responsible approach to reform.

- **Strategy 7: Denigrate Reform Efforts as Vote-Buying**

Several right-wing leaders have suggested that Democratic supporters of comprehensive immigration reform are selling out the national interest in order to win votes from the growing Latino community. Said Texas-based Religious Right figure Rick Scarborough in 2007, “The Democrats know it’s to their advantage to bring in Third World hordes who will one day become Democratic voters.”

- **Strategy 8 : Portray Anti-Immigrant Stance as ‘Pro-Worker’ (While Voting Against Worker Interests)**

Huge job losses and real suffering being experienced by millions of families create an atmosphere that is ripe for anti-immigrant demagoguery. Some anti-immigrant activists will push this as part of the angry right-wing faux-populism that they have fostered in the health care debate.

- **Strategy 9: Push Divisive Black-Brown Wedge**

Anti-immigrant forces have long tried to use immigration as a wedge between Black and Latino communities, a political strategy to create divisions among progressive political leaders and activists. One element of the strategy is demonizing African American civil rights leaders and elected officials who have worked for passage of comprehensive reform.



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