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[Home](#) > DEPORTEN A LA MIGRA!

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By: Maria Poblet and Luis Herrera

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The Deporten A La Migra (“Deport the ICE/INS”) coalition formed in May, 2004, in response to an ICE (Immigration and Customs Enforcement) raid in San Francisco’s Mission District, and recently expanded by merging with the Drivers Licenses Coalition. We are a Coalition led by grassroots organizations with a people of color membership base, led by working class immigrants from Latin America.

Our roots are in the anti-gentrification movement in the Mission District, and we connect our experiences of being displaced from our countries to the experience of being displaced from our homes in San Francisco. The displacement that we suffer in our countries also exists here when the same corporations that exploit us in our home countries make agreements with the government to redesign—gentrify—a working class neighborhood and kick out all of us who have made our lives and homes here. That’s why we need to fight together to stop the problem at its roots.

Our grassroots work is based on a broad vision for fundamental change in society. With or without immigration papers, we believe all people deserve equality—drivers licenses, the right to vote, the right to work for a just salary, the right to decent housing, the right to fair immigration policies, the right to health care, the right to education, and the right to the preservation of our diverse languages and cultures. With or without work, we all deserve these human rights. We also deserve to live free from persecution by la Migra (ICE/INS) in collaboration with the police, and the persecution of vigilante groups—whether they’re on the border or in the government.

We’re fed up with federal & local authorities, politicians, laws, vigilantes, and paramilitary groups that attack the migrant and immigrant community (migrants cross the border to work; immigrants stay and make their life in this country). And we’re committed to community organizing in order to build a movement with a broad enough base and a sharp enough vision to challenge the root cause of these problems.

We take from agricultural land reform movements in our home countries the slogan La Tierra es Para Quien la Trabaja (The Land Belongs to Those who Work It). We do not believe that the land should be controlled and patrolled by those people who have enough money to buy it, or who inherited it from those whose stole it. Whether we are employed or unemployed, the workers who create value from the land should have democratic control over the land.

Without the work that our im/migrant community does, this country wouldn’t exist. Here in California, we are a majority of the population. We are the ones who build the houses people live in and the offices they work in; we are the ones who raise people’s children; we are the ones that grow and serve the food that people eat. Our contributions are

essential to the functioning of this society and we demand that they be respected as such. Just like movements for the redistribution of land in the third world, we too demand democratic control over land.

We recognize that the root cause of immigration is the economic system of imperialism that we live under, which tramples human rights in pursuit of profit, and plunders third world countries. It is because of this system that products made by multinational corporations from the hard work of exploited workers from our countries cross the border without any problem and go directly for sale in this country and throughout the world—thanks to free trade agreements like NAFTA, FTAA, CAFTA, etc. But when as human beings we want to cross—looking for an alternative to the dismal conditions caused by wars, multinational corporations and corrupt politicians in our countries—we find laws, patrols, and even vigilantes that prevent us from crossing the same border.

Concrete solidarity

But the experience of our im/migrant community is not just characterized by suffering and injustice. As a coalition of Latino im/migrants, we find a great strength in the popular struggles against imperialism in our home countries. Many of the im/migrant leaders in our movement bring with them the depth of knowledge and anti-imperialist consciousness that they gained through their participation in national liberation movements in Latin America in the 1970s and 1980s. Here in the US, we have the opportunity to build organizations that bring together people from many different countries and cultures, and the rich heritage of the third world revolutionary experiments that they have come from. We also have the challenge of building concrete forms of solidarity between ourselves, a primarily Latino coalition, with other exploited and oppressed communities in this country, including im/migrants from other countries in Asia, Africa and the Arab world, African Americans, and Native Americans.

Deporten a la Migra has local, statewide and national work. In San Francisco, we are fighting for enforcement of the “City of Sanctuary” ordinance. This law, which prevents local government agencies (including law enforcement) from collaborating in any way with federal immigration authorities (like asking or reporting someone’s immigration status), has been ignored in SF since the implementation of the PATRIOT Act.

In California, we have joined the statewide campaign for driver licenses for undocumented immigrants. Most recently, more than 200 immigrants traveled by bus to the state capitol to demand unmarked driver licenses.

On a national level, we are a part of the broad group of progressive forces defending border communities from the attacks of racist vigilantes such as “The Minutemen Project,” and holding anti-immigrant politicians—who we call “Minutemen in Suits”—accountable. In April of 2005 we participated in a solidarity delegation to Arizona, met with local organizations, and participated in several actions including a vigil at the Arizona/Sonora border and a press conference and direct action at the state capitol. On September 16 of this year, the vigilante group “Friends of the Border Patrol” has organized a “civilian patrol” of the San Diego/Tijuana border, to coincide with Mexican Independence Day. Our coalition will be a part of opposing these vigilantes, and their peers in the state and national governments.

Deporten a la Migra is one of many revolutionary experiments in community organizing. In

order to win the world we want, we must organize in each community, from the Mission District to Chinatown, from San Francisco to Phoenix, from Baghdad to San Salvador, and create whole communities of resistance.

¡La Tierra es Para Quien la Trabaja! ¡Deporten a la Migra!

Organizations represented in Deporten a la Migra include Mujeres Unidas y Activas, Day Labor Program, Comite de Vivienda San Pedro/St. Peter's Housing Committee, Colectiva de Mujeres/Women's Collective of the Day Labor Program, La Raza Centro Legal, SIREN, Voluntarios de la Comunida de San Jose, La Raza City College, Jornaleros de Mountain View, Centro Legal de La Raza from Oakland, Project VOICE of American Friends Service Committee, SF Living Wage Coalition, LACLA, CARECEN, CISPES, Red Ciudadana Salvadoreña, Heads Up Collective, PODER, and ASATA.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Maria Poblet has organized with the St. Peter's Housing Committee in the immigrant community of San Francisco's Mission District, since 1999. She is an anti-imperialist Latina poet, popular educator, and futbol enthusiast.

Luis Herrera organized for four years along the Mexico/US border in Arizona before joining St. Peter's Housing Committee and Deporten a la Migra. He loves anarco-punk rock, hates borders and makes kick-ass tamales.

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