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Wingspan News

Oct 24, 2006

Coalición de Derechos Humanos and Wingspan Joint Statement

Stand Against Racism and Homophobia: Vote NO on Propositions 100, 102, 103, 107 and 300

Coalición de Derechos Humanos and Wingspan recognize that propositions 100, 102, 103 and 300 are simply the latest in an ongoing, state- and nationwide campaign of coded racist dehumanization aimed at undocumented migrants and anyone else of color who might fit the underlying racial profile. We also recognize that proposition 107 is a continuation of homophobic attacks aimed at lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender people of all races, ethnicities, and nations. Using an onslaught of initiatives in multiple states, state and federal legislation, and demonizing words and images, these campaigns of dehumanization do great harm to all people.

Propositions 100, 102, 103 and 300: The true intent of this racist anti-migrant campaign is evident in its proponents' hostile and dehumanizing language -- language that demonizes and insults. In the publicity pamphlet for the November 7 election, for example, we see what are now common demonizing themes, such as: repetitive use of the word "illegal" to label human beings rather than specific actions; repeated references to undocumented migrants as "invaders"; implicit and explicit links between speaking Spanish, lawbreaking and invasion; and unsubstantiated rhetorical links between "illegal aliens" and ills such as violence and drug use that in truth plague all segments of U.S. society -- not just those that this campaign's leadership chooses to target. This type of hateful language positions undocumented migrants -- and others who might be mistaken for undocumented migrants -- as both dangerous and less than human.

The function of this systematic campaign of dehumanization is fourfold. First, it creates and justifies wide-scale mistreatment and exploitation of undocumented migrants at the hands of unscrupulous employers seeking an easy-to-control labor force, at the hands of law enforcement, and also at the hands of vigilantes and other individuals who act out the policies, taking this kind of hate legislation as permission to practice socially acceptable racism.

Second, this dehumanization campaign portrays a conveniently positioned scapegoat to divert attention and energy away from the real and complicated reasons for the ongoing migrant deaths and current migration patterns -- such as unjust and hypocritical U.S. immigration policies, exploitative trade policies that must be changed, and an economic dynamic that disproportionately benefits U.S. consumers at the expense of citizens from countries south of the U.S. border.

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Third, the scapegoating also diverts attention away from finding real solutions to pressing and painful U.S. problems -- such as lack of healthcare for all, government corruption and erosion of democracy, and systematic misallocation of resources into the pockets of the wealthy elite at the expense of all other members of our society. The leaders of this campaign ask voters to focus on and blame its chosen scapegoats for what ails U.S. society. The scapegoating tactic diverts energy and attention away from honest, factually-based assessments of what the real problems are, and what solutions would actually be effective.

Finally, this campaign justifies and supports an increasingly massive system in which removal of civil and human rights within the United States is a profit-making enterprise, especially for military contractors (like Halliburton). In this system, select companies make money from having more and more people in privately- owned prisons and detention centers, and from government contracts to increase militarization at the border.

Proposition 107

The intent of this campaign is not to "protect marriage" in the state of Arizona; rather, it is to position LGBT people as waging an assault on traditional, heterosexual families. While this proposition undoubtedly will affect unmarried heterosexual couples, the impetus for this campaign is homophobia, and it is non-heterosexuals who are the primary targets. We believe that rights such as healthcare, childcare, and visitation should not be granted only through marital arrangements. However, we also believe that further reducing LGBT people's access to marriage or domestic partner benefits is blatantly wrong.

The functions of this homophobic campaign are resonant with the functions of the anti-migrant campaign. First, this campaign suggests that the reason that marriage is "in crisis" is because of LGBT people who want to forever alter the meaning of marriage and thus destroy the "sanctity" of marriage. That more than half of heterosexual marriages end in divorce, and many others are plagued by violence, infidelity, child abuse and other problems has nothing to do with whether LGBT people can marry or not.

However, this leads to the second function of this campaign: to scapegoat LGBT people for the decline of so-called "family values" in the United States. This campaign mistakenly suggests that all kinship arrangements outside of heterosexual marriage are immoral and do not deserve protection. In particular, it makes use of existing stereotypes of LGBT people as deviant and immoral to advance its narrow-minded, misguided agenda. What this campaign does not discuss is the ways in which the "traditional values" it advocates for have long benefited only a select few. In fact, this campaign is not really about protecting marriage at all; instead, marriage is simply the new arena for the right wing to attack and fundraise off the backs of LGBT people. Millions of dollars have been funneled into federal programs to "Strengthen Marriage"—programs that LGBT people pay for, but are federally barred from accessing.

Third, as with the anti-migrant campaign, this scapegoating takes attention away from finding real solutions to the many problems plaguing society-- such as lack of healthcare for all, government corruption and crumbling democracy, and systematic misallocation of resources into the pockets of the wealthy elite at the expense of all other members of our society. As we also see with Prop 100, 102, 103 and 300, Prop 107's advocates ask voters to focus on and blame their chosen scapegoats for what ails U.S. society. This scapegoating tactic diverts energy and attention away from honest, factually-based assessments of what the real

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problems are, and what solutions would actually be effective.

Why we stand together:

Wingspan and Coalición de Derechos Humanos stand together in opposition to these racist, xenophobic, and homophobic initiatives because we acknowledge the connectedness of the repressive scapegoating tactics used against LGBTs, migrants, and LGBT migrants in initiatives such as 100, 102, 103, 107 and 300. We acknowledge that our issues cannot be faced in isolation, for those who hate us come from similar and often intertwined ideological foundations. Our opponents hope to use "divide and conquer" tactics to carry out their racist, homophobic agenda. Thus, we ask you to stand together with us, and to vote "NO" on these propositions, and to take a pro-migrant, pro-LGBT, pro-human rights stand.

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