

INTERFAITH STATEMENT IN SUPPORT OF COMPREHENSIVE IMMIGRATION REFORM

October 14, 2005

We, the undersigned faith-based leaders and organizations, join together to call upon President Bush and our elected officials in Congress to enact comprehensive immigration reform legislation that establishes a safe and humane immigration system consistent with our values. Our diverse faith traditions teach us to welcome our brothers and sisters with love and compassion.

The Hebrew Bible tells us: "The strangers who sojourn with you shall be to you as the natives among you, and you shall love them as yourself; for you were strangers in the land of Egypt (Leviticus 19:33-34)." In the New Testament, Jesus tells us to welcome the stranger (cf. Matthew 25:35), for "what you do to the least of my brethren, you do unto me (Matthew 25:40)." The Qur'an tells us that we should "serve God...and do good to...orphans, those in need, neighbors who are near, neighbors who are strangers, the companion by your side, the wayfarer that you meet, [and those who have nothing] (4:36)."

We call for immigration reform because each day in our congregations, service programs, health-care facilities, and schools we witness the human consequences of an outmoded system. We see and hear the suffering of immigrant families who have lost loved ones to death in the desert or immigrants themselves who have experienced exploitation in the workplace or abuse at the hands of unscrupulous smugglers and others. In our view, changes to the U.S. legal immigration system would help put an end to this suffering, which offends the dignity of all human beings.

We call upon our elected officials to enact legislation that includes the following:

- An opportunity for hard-working immigrants who are already contributing to this country to come out of the shadows, regularize their status upon satisfaction of reasonable criteria and, over time, pursue an option to become lawful permanent residents and eventually United States citizens;
- Reforms in our family-based immigration system to significantly reduce waiting times for separated families who currently wait many years to be reunited;
- The creation of legal avenues for workers and their families who wish to migrate to the U.S. to enter our country and work in a safe, legal, and orderly manner with their rights fully protected; and
- Border protection policies that are consistent with humanitarian values and with the need to treat all individuals with respect, while allowing the authorities to carry out the critical task of identifying and preventing entry of terrorists and dangerous criminals, as well as pursuing the legitimate task of implementing American immigration policy.

While we support the right of the government to enforce the law and protect the national security interests of the United States, we recognize that our existing complex and unworkable immigration system has made it nearly impossible for many immigrants – who seek to support their families or reunite with loved ones – to achieve legal status. Reforming the immigration system to address this reality would allow the U.S. government to focus its enforcement efforts on real threats that face all Americans – citizens and immigrants alike.

We urge our elected officials to conduct the immigration reform debate in a civil and respectful manner, mindful not to blame immigrants for our social and economic ills or for the atrocities committed by the few who have carried out acts of terrorism. A polarized process that is lacking in civility would hinder deliberative discourse and not serve the best interests of our nation.

As faith-based leaders and organizations, we call attention to the moral dimensions of public policy and pursue policies that uphold the human dignity of each person, all of whom are made in the image of God. We engage the immigration issue with the goal of fashioning an immigration system that facilitates legal status and family unity in the interest of serving the God-given dignity and rights of every individual. It is our collective prayer that the legislative process will produce a just immigration system of which our nation of immigrants can be proud.

National Organizations:

Anti-Defamation League
American Friends Service Committee (AFSC)
American Jewish Committee
American Jewish Congress
American Society for Muslim Advancement (ASMA)
B'nai B'rith International
Catholic Legal Immigration Network, Inc. (CLINIC)
Church World Service/Immigration and Refugee Program
Columban Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation Office
Conference of Major Superiors of Men
Episcopal Church USA
Gamaliel National Clergy Caucus Leadership Council
Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society (HIAS)
International Catholic Migration Commission
Irish Apostolate, USA
Islamic Circle of North America
Jesuit Conference
Jesuit Refugee Service/USA
Jewish Council for Public Affairs
Jewish Reconstructionist Federation
Jubilee Campaign USA
Justice for Our Neighbors Immigration Clinic Network
La Ermita - The Hermitage
Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service
Mennonite Central Committee U.S. Washington Office
Mexican American Cultural Center
Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate
National Council of Jewish Women
National Ministries, American Baptist Churches USA
U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops
Union for Reform Judaism
United Jewish Communities
United Methodist Committee on Relief
United States Province of the Priests of the Sacred Heart
Women In Islam, Inc.
Women's League for Conservative Judaism
World Relief

Local Organizations:

Baltimore Jewish Council
Building Bridges: Hispanic Outreach Project Community of St. Anthony Church in Canton, Ohio
Cabrini Immigrant Services, Dobbs Ferry, New York
Cabrini Immigrant Services, New York, New York
California Province of the Society of Jesus
Capuchin Province of St. Joseph, Detroit, Michigan
Catholic Charities Diocese of Des Moines
Catholic Charities Diocese of San Diego
Catholic Charities Hawaii
Catholic Charities Health and Human Services, Diocese of Cleveland
Catholic Charities Housing Opportunities (CCHO), Youngstown, Ohio
Catholic Charities in the Archdiocese of Santa Fe, New Mexico
Catholic Charities in the Diocese of Paterson, New Jersey
Catholic Charities of the Diocese of Arlington, Virginia

Catholic Charities of Tennessee, Inc.
Catholic Charities of the Archdiocese of Galveston-Houston, Texas
Catholic Charities of the Archdiocese of Washington
Catholic Migration Office of the Diocese of Brooklyn, New York
Catholic Social Services in Anchorage, Alaska
Clerics of St. Viator, Chicago Province
Commonwealth Catholic Charities of the Diocese of Richmond, Virginia
Community Relations Council of the Jewish Federation of San Antonio
Congregation of Holy Cross, Southern Province
Congregation of Our Lady of Victory Missionary Sisters, Huntington, Indiana
Detroit Province of the Society of Jesus
En Camino, Migrant and Immigrant Services, Diocese of Toledo, Ohio
Family Unity & Citizenship Program of the Diocese of Las Cruces
HIAS and Council Migration Services of Philadelphia
Hogar Hispano - Catholic Charities, Falls Church, Virginia
Houston Dominican Sisters
Human Concerns Commission of the Diocese of San Jose
Interfaith Refugee and Immigration Ministries of Illinois
Jewish Community Action, St. Paul, Minnesota
Jewish Community Relations Council of the Jewish Federation of Southern Arizona
Lutheran Children and Family Service of Eastern Pennsylvania
Lutheran Family Services in the Carolinas
Lutheran Social Service of Minnesota
Lutheran Social Services of Michigan
Lutheran Social Services of New England
Lutheran Social Services of Northern New England
Lutheran Social Services of South Dakota
Lutheran Social Services of the National Capital Area
Marianist Province of the United States, St. Louis, Missouri
Metropolitan Council on Jewish Poverty, New York
Migration and Refugee Services Diocese of Trenton, New Jersey
Missionary Sisters of the Immaculate Conception, Province of the Immaculate Conception, Paterson, New Jersey
Missionary Sisters of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, Stella Maris Province, New York, New York
Missionhurst-CICM, Arlington, Virginia
National Catholic Rural Life Conference, Des Moines, Iowa
Northern Indiana Ecumenical Multicultural Ministry (NIEMM), Morocco, Indiana
Organización for Latino Awareness of the Catholic Theological Union in Chicago
Priests of the Sacred Heart (SCJ), Hales Corners, Wisconsin
Provincial Council of the Province of St. John the Baptist of the Order of Friars Minor, Cincinnati, Ohio
River's Edge Community Church, Oella, Maryland
Saints Peter and Paul Church, Savannah, Georgia
Society of Jesus (Jesuits), New York Province
Society of the Divine Word, Chicago Province
St James Faithful Citizenship, Elizabethtown, Kentucky
St James Parish Council, Elizabethtown, Kentucky
St James Parish Social Ministries, Elizabethtown, Kentucky
St. Benedict's Abbey, Benet Lake, Wisconsin
UJA-Federation of New York
Vincentian Center for Church and Society at St. John's University, New York
Washington Buddhist Peace Fellowship (WBPF)
Western Dominican Province, Oakland, California
Wider Church Ministries - United Church of Christ, Cleveland, Ohio
Wisconsin Province of the Society of Jesus

Individual Faith Leaders:

Pamela Beech, Archdiocese of Detroit, Lay Leadership and Formation
Rev. Dr. Stephen P. Bouman, Bishop, Metropolitan New York Synod, Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
Rev. Dr. Clive Calver, Walnut Hill Community Church, Bethel, CT
P. Adem Carroll, 9/11 Relief Director Islamic Circle of North America USA (ICNA Relief)
Patrick Gilger, SJ, Loyola University Chicago
Most Reverend Nicholas DiMarzio, Bishop of Brooklyn
John E. Dister, SJ, Detroit Province Jesuits, Loyola of the Lakes Retreat House
Bob Dunden, SJ, St Benedict the Moor Parish, Omaha, NE
John C. Fickes, Detroit Province of the Society of Jesus
Francis Cardinal George, Archbishop of Chicago
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Clifton Kirkpatrick, Stated Clerk of the General Assembly, Presbyterian Church-USA
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Sister Lorraine Lauter OSU, Owensboro, Kentucky
Reverend Msgr. Ronald T. Marino, Brooklyn, New York
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Most Reverend Carlos Sevilla, S.J., Bishop of Yakima, Washington
Secretary General, Rashid Siddiqui, Islamic Circle of North America
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Most Reverend Thomas G. Wenski, Bishop of Orlando
Professor Elie Wiesel, Boston University