

Report of the
Civil Rights and Equity Committee
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CWA

Communications Workers of America

“Occupy”: Making Labor an Ally

On September 17, 2011, New York City’s Zuccotti Park was renamed Liberty Square by over 1000 protesters calling themselves “Occupy Wall Street.” These protesters, many of whom camped overnight in the park, were calling for the return of democracy and for economic justice for middle class Americans. Their cry for democracy and fairness resonated throughout the country. Encampments formed in three other cities with hundreds of protesters arrested in clashes with police who unnecessarily used pepper spray on non-violent demonstrators. That single set of protests quickly spun into what we now call the “Occupy Movement,” with hundreds of progressive organizations, including CWA, joining the struggle to repair what President Larry Cohen calls “our broken democracy.”

On October 4, 2011, the CWA Executive Board endorsed the Occupy Movement saying: “It is an appropriate expression of anger for all Americans, but especially for those who have been left behind by Wall Street. We support the activists’ non-violent efforts to seek a more equitable and democratic society based on citizenship, not corporate greed.” On October 5, 2011, CWA District 1 members marched with thousands of protesters back to Zuccotti Park (Liberty Square), while CWA members marched with Occupy in other cities to protest Verizon’s corporate greed. On November 3, 2011 hundreds of CWA members and Occupy activists marched outside a Verizon store and the U.S. Chamber of Commerce in Washington, D.C. Local 2222 president Jim Hillary told Occupiers, “Your fight is our fight.” He described the telecom giant as a “Corporation that could be a poster child for the 1%.” President Cohen told Occupy activists, “We will stand with you, but we need your help too... we’re all in this fight together.” On February 13, 2012, Occupy Atlanta, CWA, the Teamsters and Jobs with Justice held a rally to prevent AT&T from laying-off hundreds of workers at a time when they are making record profits and paying their CEO \$27 million.

Occupy Movement Addresses Income Disparity

The Civil Rights & Equity Committee commends Occupy Wall Street’s efforts, and CWA leadership’s role in supporting and promoting progressive coalition building and “Feet In The Street Activism” to reclaim democracy and economic justice for all Americans.

According to the Congressional Budget Office, between 1979 and 2007 the incomes of the top 1% of Americans grew by an average of 275%. During the same time period, the 60% of the Americans in the middle of the income scale saw their income rise by 40%. In 2007 the richest 1% of the American population owned 34.6% of the country’s total wealth, and the next 19% owned 50.5%. During economic expansion between 2002 and 2007, the income of the top 1% grew 10 times faster than the income of the bottom 90%. In this period 66% of total income gains went to the 1%, who in 2007 had a larger share of total income than any other time since 1928.

The Occupy Movement is a global struggle for equality for the disenfranchised. As long as the 1% control access to our politicians, our wages, and our basic rights, the Occupy Movement will continue to grow as more and more middle class Americans tire of shouldering the burden of the 1%'s greed. History shows that "revolution movements" go through many transitions on the road to changing our society. Occupy is no different. Already, projects such as 99% Spring drew upon a much broader message that Occupy started. Much like "Arab-spring"-- which toppled oppressive dictatorships and push some Arab Nations toward democracy in 2011-- 99% Spring trained thousands of activists who then organized and participated in hundreds of nonviolent demonstrations around the country. At the heart of these demonstrations is the same goal that prompted the initial Occupy Wall Street activists to demand corporate accountability from the most egregious employers. Again, CWA is on the front lines of 99% Spring by involving over 1500 members and successfully disrupting the Verizon shareholder meeting in Huntsville, Alabama on May 3rd. These coalition efforts are part of meeting President Cohen's objectives: "The only way we will change America, and move forward on these core issues, is through a broad movement of activists."

Voter Suppression: A Thinly Veiled Attack on Democracy

It is no surprise that after the overwhelming turnout of minorities, labor, and college students for the last Presidential election, we are now faced with right-wing attacks to suppress the vote. 2011 saw an unprecedented amount of voting law legislation sweep across the country. It is disheartening to think that in the 21st century, the United States of America is reverting back to the "Jim Crow" days of the 1950s and '60s in a coordinated effort to suppress millions of votes from people of color, the very young and the very old.

How does voter suppression happen? Under the guise of ending voter fraud, various states recently initiated and passed laws around voter identification, citizenship and registration which make voting more difficult for historically progressive groups (who consistently vote Democratic.) Conservative lawmakers spoke of fictitious problems of voter fraud to pass these laws which have real consequences that will impact close elections. Based upon analysis done by the Brennan Center for Justice at New York University School of Law, these new laws will make it significantly harder for more than 5 million eligible voters to cast ballots in 2012. This is a significant hindrance when you consider that, in the United States, less than two thirds of its eligible voters turn out on Election Day during a Presidential election, and less than half turn out in midterm elections.

The Intricacies of Voter Suppression Laws

Currently, 30 states have laws requiring voters to provide identification in order to vote. 14 of those states require voters to have specific forms of identification. In 2011, Alabama, Kansas, Rhode Island, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas and Wisconsin enacted laws which require voters to present photo IDs.

On the surface, the idea of voters showing proof of ID prior to voting does not seem bad. We usually think of it much like when one presents his or her ID to board an airplane. However, when you consider that 11% of Americans-- over 21 million citizens--currently do not possess a government-issued photo ID, you see the problem. This is compounded by the fact that minorities, low income individuals and the elderly are among the most likely to not have a valid ID. It is no mistake that these same groups are at the core of the progressive vote.

Until recently, Arizona was the only state with a law requiring individuals to produce documentation of proof of citizenship in order to register to vote. Georgia became the second state to pass similar legislation in 2009. Unfortunately, 2011 saw increased amounts of these laws in state legislatures as part of an all-out offensive to restrict benefits for and to crackdown on undocumented immigrants. Citizenship requirements were successful in Alabama, Kansas and Tennessee. Once again, citizenship documentation is just another form of intimidation designed to frighten immigrants and to keep them away from the voting booth.

Making It Harder to Register

Another tactic right wing conservatives use to suppress the vote is to inhibit voter registration. In May 2011, Florida passed a law that cut short early voting and forces third-party voter registration organizations to turn in voter registration cards in less than 48 hours. Additionally, third-party registration organizations must be trained and certified by the state. Lawmakers in Wisconsin seek to resend the states same-day registration law--a travesty when you realize it was one of the first states to initiate such a law. In Maine, the governor signed a repeal of the same-day registration after the Republican-controlled legislature passed a bill through the governor's office. Again, these measures were passed under the fictitious guise of preventing voter fraud.

Flawed purge programs is another tool being used to keep citizens from their right to vote. These purge programs remove deceased voters and voters who have moved out of the district from the voting rolls. The need for purging voter rolls comes from not maintaining accurate data through consistent reviewing and matching voter information. Mass purge programs are notorious for inadvertently deleting good data/voters from the rolls. Florida and Louisiana are two states with a history of purging ridiculous amounts of voter names and erroneously deleting scores of properly registered African Americans from the rolls.

Seeing these voter suppression patterns appear again and again in state after state throughout the 2011 legislative season, it is clear that this was a coordinated effort.

The American Legislative Exchange Council (ALEC) is a conservative group of CEO's and high level managers from corporate America who spend great sums of money to elect conservative legislators in states all across the country and

then push the ultraconservative agenda through state legislation. ALEC is principally responsible for the current attack on voting rights. Their approach is simple: attack and suppress the democratic vote, elect more conservatives who will create laws that take from the 99% and give more to the 1%. When you control who gets elected, you control what laws are passed. When you control the laws you can exploit workers, control who becomes citizens, who wins elections and who sits on the highest court in the land. When you control the law, you move a great nation from democracy (controlled by many) to oligarchy (control by a few).

We, the Communications Workers of America, must continue and expand our work with other progressive organizations in the fight to keep voting rights strong for African Americans, for Latin Americans and for Asian Americans. We must protect the right to vote for all so that our country has a government for the people, of the people and by ALL people.

Racial Profiling

No one denies, at least out loud, that racial profiling is bad policy and just plain wrong. The tougher question and the larger problem is how to end it.

We all remember the infamous Rodney King incident 20 years ago. Racial profiling became headline news. The nation was fixated on the issue much the same as it currently is on Trayvon Martin's sad demise. Reverend Al Sharpton remarked that it was a missed opportunity to rally around the issue of police brutality and injustice. He continued, "We cannot get caught [once again] in the trap of racial division. Although race may very well have led to young Trayvon being profiled by Zimmerman in the first place, we cannot allow our reaction to be based on race. Trayvon was an unarmed teenager who was walking home when he was killed. No matter what our own background, we cannot in good conscience accept the unnecessary death of a young child, and we should demand that his killer at least go before the court and be held accountable."

Notably, Florida investigators, *only* after a huge outcry of progressives around the country, finally concluded that Zimmerman profiled Trayvon as he walked home, which resulted in the altercation that led to the shooting. Zimmerman now has been charged with second-degree murder.

Racial profiling is something people of color continue to live with and negotiate around every day to avoid becoming a victim. It's clear we haven't learned to "just get along." The stakes are higher and the players who exacerbate the situation are better funded and politically astute.

Once again, American Legislative Exchange Council (ALEC) plays a role in this strategy. ALEC is an ultra conservative non-profit policy organization whose mission is purportedly to 'to advance the fundamental principles of free-market enterprise, limited government, and federalism at the state level through a

nonpartisan public-private partnership of America's state legislators, members of the private sector and the general public." The infamous Koch brothers and numerous major corporations, hardly friends of progressives or labor unions, heavily fund them. Together with the National Rifle Association (NRA), ALEC is also heavily associated with laws like "Stand Your Ground" in several states as well as efforts to restrict voter registration. The former is a central debate point in the Trayvon Martin case and the latter clearly targets minorities and communities of color. None of this has anything to do with ALEC's stated pro-business agenda, but everything to do with problems we face. As NPR journalist Anna John commented, "'Stand Your Ground' laws are controversial, in part, because they can be employed as an affirmative defense and used to gain immunity from criminal charges and civil suits."

Polls confirm that the Trayvon Martin case is dividing the country along racial, generational, political and by economic lines. In polling by The Monitor/TIPP, confirmed in principle by the Gallup Poll and the Pew Research Center, twice as many blacks and Hispanics as whites say race played a major role in the shooting of Trayvon. By 66% to 43% margin, younger respondents agree. Women come to the same conclusion, by 48% to 39% margin over men. Similar majorities are found with Democrats and those with modest incomes. Polling results also show that younger respondents, women, blacks and Hispanics, and Democrats are more likely to see racial profiling as a problem.

On April 17th, a Senate subcommittee held hearings on the state of racial profiling in America. Legislators, legal experts, law enforcement and advocates provided testimony. The End of Racial Profiling Act of 2011 (S. 1670) was debated by committee members – an act that would outlaw racial profiling by law enforcement, would strengthen ties between minority communities and law enforcement through training, and would establish an independent audit program to ensure appropriate responses to allegations of profiling. Criminologist David Harris testified that research proves racial profiling doesn't work, "In many contexts, in many types of police agencies, the results all fall in the same direction: when racial or ethnic profiling is used, police are less likely, not more likely, to catch bad guys."

Yet conservatives argued against the Act. Roger Clegg, President and General Counsel for the conservative think-tank Center for Equal Opportunity completely missed the point when he stated, "...we have to recognize that it's going to be tempting for the police and individuals to profile as long as a disproportionate amount of street crime is committed by African-Americans."

The need is clear, we must ensure that law enforcement revolves around the need to build community trust and that laws are carried out in ways that are effective, fair and just. It's just as clear that working families – women, people of color, those of modest income and the younger generation – agree that it remains a serious issue in our society. It comes back to what we are prepared to do to end it. There is a way to fight back, on several fronts.

Already due to the overwhelming public outcry over the Trayvon Martin case, a broad coalition of progressive groups have led the charge to spotlight ALEC's role, resulting in picketing and a growing number of major corporations dropping their membership. "Our organizations are sending a clear message to ALEC and the corporations that sponsor it that you cannot come for black money by day and try to take away our votes and our lives by night," declared Color of Change's Executive Director Raqsad Robinson, "...corporate accountability is coming...We need to hold both politicians and the corporations who are behind them accountable when they act in opposition to the values we hold dear in a democracy."

We must shine a brighter spotlight on the actions of organizations like ALEC that are involved in undermining our values through funding of ventures that have little to do with pro-business. We must join in coalition with our natural allies to continue such actions and convince any of our affiliated employers to drop ALEC membership. With only 14 co-sponsors, we must press legislators to endorse and support The End of Racial Profiling Act of 2011 (S. 1670, HR 3618).

We must educate our members about the insidious movement to destroy the fabric of justice and democracy by attempts to suppress votes and fund laws like "Stand Your Ground" that exacerbate tragedies like Trayvon by allowing immunity from criminal charges and civil suits.

We can and we must. President Obama told us if he had a son, he'd look like Trayvon. Trayvon's mother poignantly stated, "As I've said before and I'll say again, Trayvon is our son, but Trayvon is your son." Trayvon's father hoped his son did not die in vain. Reverend Sharpton summed it up best, "Today, whatever the outcome of the Zimmerman case, let us channel our anger to build. Let's change 'Stand Your Ground' laws, 'stop & frisk' policies, racial profiling and sentencing disparities. We are 20 years older [from the Rodney King incident]; let's show that we are mature and focused. Change is the goal."

Expand Outreach to Asian Pacific American CWA Workers

The Communication Workers of America has developed a fruitful history of working with many constituency groups in a labor climate where workers are often alienated based upon their race, sex, nationality or sexual orientation. The same alienated workers are the backbone of today's labor movement. It is imperative that the labor movement is inclusive--not exclusive--of all constituencies and that the principles of fair wages, safe work environments and

secure benefits are communicated through the constituent communities. Therefore, it is CWA's goal to build and empower our membership by working with, and supporting, various constituency groups so that we communicate and relate to current and future members from more than just a common employer or industry perspective.

One such constituency group is the Asian Pacific American Labor Alliance (APALA). Founded in 1992, APALA is the first and only national organization of Asian Pacific American union members to advance worker and immigrant civil rights. APALA has 13 chapters in 8 states connecting Asian Pacific Americans with the broader labor movement.

The role Asian Pacific Americans have played in labor history is significant. From labor heroes like Philip Vera Cruz, a Filipino labor organizer instrumental in the formation of the United Farm Workers union, to Gene Viernes and Silme Domingo who cofounded the Alaska Cannery Workers Association, Asian Pacific Americans have proven themselves important to American labor.

It is very important that CWA connects our members to organizations like APALA as well as the National Council of Asian Pacific Americans (NCAPA), which is a coalition of 31 Asian Pacific American organizations around the country. Based in Washington DC, NCAPA serves to represent the interests of the greater Asian American and native Hawaiian Pacific Islanders communities as a national voice.

Asian Pacific Americans with Latinos are the fastest growing ethnic groups in the United States working force. In 2009 alone, Asian Pacific Americans represented one out of every 20 U.S. workers. This was up from one out of every 40 U.S. workers 20 years earlier. They are also the fastest growing ethnic group in organized labor, accounting for just under one in 20 unionized workers.

After adjusting for characteristics such as age, education level, industry and state, unionized Asian-Pacific American workers earn about 14.3% more than non-unionized Asian-Pacific American workers with similar characteristics. This translates to about \$2.50 per hour more for unionized Asian Pacific American workers.

Additionally, unionized Asian-Pacific American workers are also about 16% more likely to have health insurance and about 22% more likely than their nonunion counterparts to have a retirement plan. Union benefits are also greatest for Asian Pacific Americans working in the 15 lowest paying occupations. Low-wage workers earn about 20.1% more than nonunion Asian Pacific American workers in low-paying occupations. Those in unions are also about 23.2% more likely to have employer-provided health insurance and 26.3% more likely to have a retirement plan through their job. Also, it is important to note that Asian Pacific American workers who are able to bargain collectively earn more and are more likely to have benefits associated with good jobs. Clearly, better protection for

workers rights to unionize would have a substantial positive impact on the pay and benefits of Asian Pacific American workers.

Thanks to anti-discrimination hiring policies, state and local governments employ many minorities, including Asian Pacific Americans. Along with CWA and other public-sector unions Asian Pacific Americans are aggressively fighting the conservative right wing attacks on public sector collective bargaining. APALA members nationwide have participated in “We Are One” actions to support public workers. Members in cities like Pittsburgh, Detroit, Oakland and New York City, have rallied against legislation that seeks to take away or lessen the right to bargain, to vote and to afford a college education for immigrant and native-born workers. Currently, 55 separate Asian Pacific American organizations are showing solidarity in the fight to save collective bargaining in the public sector nationwide.

CWA understands that the current blocks to democracy, including anti-immigration legislation, are issues that unite all constituency groups, and that it will take all of us working together to break through these blocks. Consequently, the Civil Rights and Equity Committee supports APALA and all of Labor's constituency groups as a bridge to the diverse communities of Labor. It is the bridge to these communities that strengthen partnerships in the struggle to enhance the standard of living of all workers.

Uniting Communities

Racial injustice and gay inequality come from the same place...hate! Consequently, one would think that the African American community and the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) community would be working together to bring this nation to a place where all people are treated equally. Unfortunately they do not.

Even though the LGBT and people of color communities ultimately want the same things, acceptance and equal treatment, they are often pitted against each other. The Western States Center notes that the far right often tries to divide the two communities by claiming that communities of color are more homophobic than white communities. This is clearly an overstatement that is designed to do nothing but keep these to highly active and mobilized communities from working together to bring about change.

In 2010, for the first time since Gallop began its annual Values and Beliefs survey, more than half of the respondents said gay and lesbian relations were “normally acceptable.” The number had risen most years since 2001, and reached 52 percent in 2010. The percentage that said gay and lesbian relations are “morally wrong” dropped to a new low of 43 percent. Support of same-sex marriage increased, too, although more than half still opposed it. The overall trend for acceptance of the LGBT community is moving in a positive direction. But when you look at how overwhelmingly communities of color voted against

same sex marriage it is clear that there is not the same level of support in those communities. It is this fact that the far right uses to drive a wedge between the two communities, and successfully prompting the two to fight each other rather than fighting together for the social change that they both want.

To say that the trends are this way because the communities of color are more homophobic is hugely over simplified and therefore misleading. It has been proven that acceptance increases when people know gay or lesbian individuals, and for decades, white gays were more open to the mainstream. In contrast, gay persons of color have been much slower to “come out” and be openly gay in the community. Consequently, communities of color are not effectively reached in campaigns around gay marriage initiatives which explain why they vote overwhelmingly against such measures. It is not because communities of color are more homophobic. As more people who embody both communities, African American and Latino gay men and women, openly express their identity, it stands to reason that the communities of color will also grow more accepting of the LGBT community.

These two dynamic communities need to come together and develop a single voice to address the socioeconomic disparities, institutional racism, and inequity of services which both face daily. Together they can collectively act to obtain self-determination, wellness, justice, and prosperity.

The far Right Wing Conservatives consistently employ the “divide and conquer” strategy. If they can keep us progressive organizations and communities fighting amongst themselves, and focused upon that which divides us instead of that which unites us, then the progressive movement will not gain the momentum necessary to bring forward change.

Organized labor is uniquely positioned to build the broad based coalition needed for change because our memberships are diverse. Within our ranks we have members of most all communities. We have people of color and we have members of the LGBT community. We must do all that we can to tear down the walls between them, and bring these two very large communities together into the broader coalition. We need to help each community focus on that which currently unites us all, breaking through the blocks to democracy, and shrink the wealth gap between the 99% and the 1%.

We can do this by continuing our support of the constituency groups and encouraging our member to get involved with these groups on a deeper level. In our own campaigns, we can make a conscious effort to insure that members from all communities, but in particular members of the LGBT and people of color communities’ march together, demonstrate together and fight together. The more that we facilitate these two communities interacting together, the more the walls between the two will crumble.

Fight for the American dream - The Dream Act

America is wasting \$113 billion a year sending illegal immigrants to jail. Moreover, United States citizens are being forced to choose between their country and close family members. Consequently, our immigration policies are both shortsighted and lacking common sense. Legalizing unauthorized immigrants would help the country's economy.

Recent studies have shown that current immigration policies are hurting state economies. The Dream Act can start to fix these flawed policies, which are disenfranchising millions of people and lead to anti-democracy measures. Every year, 65,000 high school graduates will struggle to reach the American dream because they are undocumented citizens. These children have been in the United States for most of their lives, but since they aren't citizens of the United States, their ability to go to college or get a fair paying job is greatly diminished. The DREAM Act would fix this problem by allowing those children a path to citizenship so that they can move out of the shadows and continue to contribute to the economic growth of the United States.

The super rich 1% of Americans and the corporations they own are fostering hate and division among average citizens and effort to keep us from having a say in our own government. They successfully set us arguing amongst ourselves with wedge issues like birth control, and who can marry whom effectively taking our focus off the right to vote, the right to decent wages, and the right to citizenship.

The Institute for Taxation and Economic policy (ITEP) estimates that the state and local tax paid in 2010 by households that are headed by unauthorized immigrants was \$11.2 billion. That included \$1.2 billion and personal income taxes, \$1.6 billion and property taxes, and \$8.4 billion in sales tax. The states receiving the most tax revenue from households headed by unlawful authorized immigrants were California (\$2.7 billion), Texas (\$1.6 billion), Florida (\$806.8 million), New York (\$662.4 million), and Illinois (\$499.2 million). These figures should be kept in mind as politicians and commentators continue with the seemingly endless debate over what to do with unauthorized immigrants already living in United States. Clearly, these immigrants and their family members are adding value to the US economy not only as taxpayers, but as workers, consumers, and entrepreneurs as well.

A 2011 report by Dr. Raul Hinojosa-Ojeda and Marshall Fitz found that deporting all of the unauthorized immigrants in an Arizona would decrease total employment by 17.2%, eliminating 581,000 jobs for immigrants and native-born workers alike. This would also shrink the state economy by \$48.8 billion, and reduce state tax revenues by 10.1%. According to the Immigration Policy Center:

“After passing its immigration enforcement bill (HP 87), Georgia's agricultural industry experienced severe labor shortages. A survey of farmers conducted by

the Georgia Department of Agriculture found 56% of those surveyed were experiencing difficulty finding workers. Early reports from the state estimate economic losses for the 2011 growing season to be between \$300 million and \$1 billion.

Alabama agricultural Commissioner John McMillan stated, "The economic hardship to farmers and agribusiness will reverberate throughout Alabama's economy, as one 5th of all jobs in our state come from farming."

A Georgia Restaurant Association survey found that nearly half (49%) of surveyed restaurants reported labor shortages, and 80% were concerned about future shortages. Lack of workers and related business losses have cut some restaurants revenue by as much as \$80,000 per month.

The new PEW Hispanic analysis finds that nearly 4 in 5 (79%) of the 5.1 million children (younger than age 18) of authorized immigrants were born in this country and therefore are U.S. Citizens.

These workers play a large role in the US economy, changes need to be made that will allow them receive rights that match their contributions to the United States. Just as the 1% support bills that suppress the right to vote in states around the country, they also benefit from keeping undocumented workers in the shadows and without a voice at the ballot box. Citizens without full rights are often targets of exploitation by employers and scapegoats for politicians looking to deflect the blame away from the real culprits. The DREAM Act is an important stride towards fixing this problem, by allowing children who came to the United States as minors to receive full citizenship and access to in-state tuition at public institutions of learning. When all citizens have the same rights to vote and express themselves under the law, our democracy grows stronger and the power of the 99% grows. Passing the DREAM act is the first step towards this more democratic future, and our union should be doing all that we can to support this legislation.

Immigration: the true meaning of color

The gate way to the United States of America's legal entry, was through Ellis Island. Now it is at every border crossing, air and sea ports.

There was a time more immigrants were welcomed because there was a workforce shortage. People were needed to work in construction, factories, restaurants and on farms as well as various other types of work.

As the economy changed because of population growth and changes in the law, different visas were offered to visitors entering the United States. Some visitors overstayed their visas. In other cases, some entered the country without papers and with no intention of leaving. These undocumented immigrants found work where they could, and for a while there was no problem, even though their lack of

status was known. A strong middle class emerged soon with the growing presence of local unions, like CWA. More jobs were available to more groups of workers in the middle part of the 20th century. Sometime in the eighties the economy began to struggle, and unions came under attack from conservative politicians who wrote laws that favored the employer over employees. Along with the decline of labor, so too went a stable middle class and middle class jobs. Companies found themselves with a workforce that was willing to work for sub par wages and no benefits. It became the norm to outsource work to other countries, with cheap unregulated labor. In some cases companies would subcontract the work U.S. companies would provide workers, some undocumented, who because of hardship or lack of available jobs would take the job just to survive.

Immigrants have been a part of our communities and workforce for some time, this is nothing new. Now however, because of the prolonged recession and the strangle hold that is placed on workers, every job is envied. Many jobs that no one wanted before are now in high demand as people struggle to survive. This is not a coincidence; this is calculated. Many corporations are finding ways to get fewer workers to work harder for less. Companies are compensated even though they take work overseas. It is all about the bottom line, profit and bonuses for the shareholders and CEO.

Even though a small portion of these immigrants are without the proper paper work they have created an awareness that goes beyond work or working conditions. It is no coincidence that when the word immigrant is used we are conditioned to immediately think of people of color. Yet, every year people from all over Europe immigrate to this country. However, these immigrants blend into the system. Nonetheless, it is the "immigrants of color" that seem to be getting all the negative attention.

Now that we are in another Presidential election cycle the conservatives realize that many immigrants, their parents and their voting age children vote democratic, and support unions. Obviously, this creates a problem for the Republican Party, particularly in a close election. This is also why we have seen the most aggressive anti-immigration legislation in our nation's history pass through state legislatures over the past four years.

The immigration issue has reached such a point, that some states have passed laws that allow legal citizens to be stopped by police just because they look different. In other instances states have created barriers voting, making it hard for certain citizens to vote.

All of these restrictions would be fine if there were a real problem of undocumented immigrants attempting to vote. There is no such problem. These measures are blatant attempts prevent people of color from electing or reelecting democratic candidates.

We have relied on immigrant workers from the beginning, and there will always be a place for them in this dynamic economy. Whether as visitors or workers every one coming to this country deserves an equal opportunity. We must stop playing politics with immigrants of color who deserve the same freedoms granted to the European immigrants. Immigrants of color are just as important to this country as any other race.

Discrimination in any color is wrong. Unfortunately, it is no longer about democracy, rather about wealth and making the rich richer. When all are given the same chances, all families grow into better communities and eventually the whole country prospers. There is a place for every one, take color out of the immigration process.

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