

Solidarity With Our Neighbors

Family Farm Defenders Joins the New Sanctuary Movement

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Imagine being dragged home by armed men, beaten, and then thrown behind bars to await some horrible fate. This is exactly what happened to Joshua Glover on the night of March 10th, 1854 in Racine WI. Glover was a runaway slave from St. Louis, MO who had escaped two years earlier to live in dignity in the north. His former master, though, had offered a \$200 bounty for his capture, and now a slave capture posse - including federal marshals enforcing the Fugitive Slave Act - had tracked him down. Thankfully, his plight was not ignored, and word soon spread about his abduction. Close to a thousand anti-slavery activists, led by the Racine county sheriff and other abolitionists, converged on Milwaukee, and in open defiance of the law broke into the jailhouse to free Glover. Family farmers, many of whom were immigrants themselves who had fled persecution in Europe, spirited Glover away and provided shelter for several weeks until he was able to stow away aboard a boat heading up Lake Michigan to Canada. Over 100 other slaves took the Underground Railroad to freedom through WI prior to the outbreak of the Civil War in 1861.

Fast forward to 2017. Over 2000 mostly Muslim refugees fled across the frozen fields in MN, ND and Vt. to find safety in Canada within the first three months of the Trump Administration. Immigration Customs Enforcement (ICE) arrests of undocumented immigrant have jumped from 9,000 per month at the end of Obama Administration to over 13,000 today. Once again, armed agents with state support are hunting down people - our neighbors in our own communities - simply because of their particular status. Many of those detained end up separated from their families and



friends. Children are left abandoned at their schools when their parents suddenly “disappear.” Others are assaulted and brutalized in the dehumanizing process leading to their possible deportation. What would you do? Would you be a silent witness to such injustice or take action?

Like 160 years ago, we now face another challenging moment in American history. A vast draconian array of xenophobic, racist, and discriminatory policies targeting all sorts of people are now being implemented. Emboldened by the White House, extremist organizations such as the KKK, Neo-Nazis, and other Alt Right groups, are ramping up their own hateful rhetoric and recruiting new followers for a fresh wave of violent attacks those who believe to be “un-American.” The riot that left one peaceful counter protester, Heather Heyer, dead in Charlottesville, VA is just the latest example. Such systemat-

ic terrorism and violent oppression has been suffered by many groups for centuries now.

Here in Wisconsin this is an especially pressing issue since so much of our cultural heritage and our economic vitality depends on the strength and diversity found in our proud immigrant history. Everything from our beer and cheese to our cooperatives and festivals, would not exist without the creative infusion from places like Norway, Sweden, Germany, Poland, Laos, and Tibet to name a few.

Wisconsin’s \$43 billion dairy industry also depends up 16,000 + immigrant workers, most from Mexico and Central America, the vast majority of which are also undocumented. Many other immigrants from Europe, Africa, the Caribbean, and elsewhere can be found working across WI in the tourism, agroprocessing, manufacturing, construction, restaurant and healthcare sectors. *Continued pg.9*

Dairy farm workers have been prominent participants in recent “Dia Sin Latinos/Day without Latinos” rallies held in Madison and Milwaukee, often carrying signs that ask “Who’s Gonna Milk?” Latino/activists have also been at the forefront of organizing celebrations of International Workers Day on May 1st.

But as the Wisconsin Center for Investigative Journalism (<http://wisconsinwatch.org>) has shown in its latest in depth series, the golden dream of Coming to America to find a better future has now become a political nightmare for many, and some immigrants are literally packing their bags and abandoning WI to return to their original homelands. Their farmer “bosses,” some of which voted for Trump, are having second thoughts about the economic fallout from last year’s election. For those who do choose to remain, the climate of fear and hatred is making life more difficult.

In response to this growing crisis, on July 6th, the Dane County Sanctuary Coalition made its debut. This coalition of 36 congregations and organizations including Family Farm Defenders formally announced their intention to provide sanctuary to those immigrants and refugees facing harassment and/or deportation. This declaration follows in the wake of earlier organizing efforts by such groups as: Voces de la Frontera, Centro Hispano, Union of Trabajadores Imigrantes, Workers Rights Center, Interfaith Center for Worker Justice, WI Network for Peace and Justice, Wisconsin Faith Voices for Justice to provide “Sanctuary in the Streets” for those targeted in the community. Grassroots solidarity is already well underway in other parts of the country with Philadelphia providing one especially inspirational example (<http://sanctuaryphiladelphia.org/>).

Several WI municipalities such as the City of Madison and Milwaukee have



also taken their own steps through various resolutions and/or policies to declare themselves “sanctuary cities.” Some “sanctuary campuses” have also emerged such as at Northland College in Ashland, WI and Nuestro Mundo Elementary School in Monona, WI.

Speaking truth to power is not without consequences. In the 1980s the Reagan Administration targeted those who came to the aid of Central American refugees fleeing the U.S. backed dictatorships, and, similarly, the Trump Administration is now threatening to go after those who oppose it’s crackdown on immigrants and refugees. In particular, sanctuary cities could lose federal funding for not assisting ICE with roundups. In case of Milwaukee, alone, this defiance could mean a loss of up to \$7.5 million per year.

Republicans in the WI Legislature have even proposed requiring all law enforcement agents to inquire about a person’s status in any encounter, and would also fine any city or county up to \$5,000 per day for not supporting ICE activities.

Abolitionist leaders who aided the escape of Joshua Glover back in 1854 were charged with felonies and some spent years in court and prison. Individuals and organizations who harbor and/or transport those being pursued by ICE today could face similar repercussions - for more details, read the ACLU briefing (<http://www.uccfiles.com/pdf/ACLU-Sanctuary-FAQ-4-13-2017.pdf>)

Of course, some laws are unjust and have to be broken in order for social change to occur, and those involved in the new sanctuary movement are prepared to make that sacrifice in solidarity with their neighbors and the broader community.

For more resources relate to the New Sanctuary Movement check out:

- National Sanctuary Movement: <http://www.sanctuarynotdeportation.org/>
- Voces de la Frontera: <http://vdlf.org/campaigns/new-sanctuary-movement/>
- WI Network for Peace & Justice <http://www.wnpj.org/sanctuary>