Solidarity With Our Neighbors
Family Farm Defenders Joins the New Sanctuary Movement
By: John E. Peck, Executive Director Family Farm Defenders

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, converged on Milwaukee, and the Racine county sheriff and other abolitionists, converged on Milwaukee, and in open defiance of the law broke him out of the jailhouse to free Glover.

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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.

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, Worker 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 this 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 already 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.

Of course, some laws are unjust and have to 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

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. uccfileis.com/pdf/ACLU-Sanctuary- FAQ-4-13-2017.pdf)

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://wiscconsinswatch.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 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.

Like 160 years ago, we now face another challenging moment in American history. A vast draco road of xenophobic, racist, and discriminatory policies targeting all sorts of people are now being implement ed. Emboldened by the White House, extremist organizations such as the KKK, Neo-Nazis, and the 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-protector, Heather Heyer, dead in Charlottesville, VA is just the latest example. Such systematic terrorism and violent oppression has been suffered by many groups for centuries now.

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