

Testimony of
The Reverend Samuel Rodriguez

October 8, 2009

Rev. Samuel Rodriguez
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Senate Hearing Testimony
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Embedded within the Historical election of 2008 lies a clarion call and a prophetic supplication for national unity accompanied by an alignment of our core values. Values that include both security and compassion, the rule of law and welcoming the stranger, mercy and justice. Accordingly, the lack of passage of Comprehensive Immigration Reform legislation has created a reality where our Borders are yet fully secured and the immigrant families a long with the entire Hispanic American community find ourselves facing racial profiling, discrimination and a hostile ethnically polarized environment not seen since the days prior to the successes of the Civil rights movement. For at the end of the day this is not a political issue but rather one of a moral and spiritual imperative."

We applaud our President and declare that we stand with him as he demonstrates that he is a man of his word. A word promised in the campaign to the immigrant and Hispanic community. A word affirmed and reiterated to the Hispanic Congressional Caucus earlier this year. We understand the political realities as we deal with the economy, health care and the war in Afghanistan. But our prayer is that you, members of the Senate, do not forget one number, the number 12.

Twelve million people living in the shadows. Twelve million hiding in fear. Twelve million without rights, Twelve million without a nation, without legal covering, Twelve million not knowing if today is the day they will be separated from their children. Twelve million people living in a land without the opportunity of ever experiencing the fullness of life, embracing the hope of liberty or pursuing the promise of happiness. Yet these 12 million carry one common commodity: Hope.

Hope that the President and members of Congress that ignited a movement and ushered in change will bring down the walls of political expediency and incorporate within immigration reform the bridge to assimilation and a pathway to the American Dream. Hope that this Congress who stands committed to saving the auto industries, our banks, homeowners and healthcare will similarly apply that saving grace and spirit to these 12 million souls. Hope and Faith that this Congress will pass comprehensive immigration reform.

To that end, the fastest growing ethnic and faith demographic, Hispanic Born Again Christians and the New Evangelicals, urge the Obama Administration and Congress to pass and enact CIR as expeditiously as possible. Via our 25,434 churches and 16 million strong Hispanic Evangelical

Community, The National Hispanic Christian Leadership Conference, America's largest Hispanic Christian organization, stands committed in framing the moral imperative for CIR by reconciling both Leviticus 19, treating the stranger amongst us as one of our own and Romans 13, respecting the rule of law.

Let us be clear. As Hispanic Christians, we stand committed to the message of the Cross. However, that cross is both vertical and horizontal. It is salvation and transformation, ethos and pathos, Kingdom and society, faith and public policy, Covenant and community, righteousness and justice. Each dependent on the other, not either or, but both and. We seek to reconcile a platform where John 3:16 converges with Matthew 25 while Billy Graham meets Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. at the Masters table.

For example, as we deal with immigration, via the prism of the vertical and horizontal cross,, we humbly encourage Congress to finally pass and sign into law legislation that will protect our borders, put an end to all illegal immigration, create a market driven guest worker program and facilitate avenues by which the millions of families already in America that lack the legal status can earn such status in a manner that reflects the Judeo Christian Value system this nation was founded upon.

In addition, we urge both parties to repudiate all vestiges of xenophobia and nativism that saturates this debate. For the fact of the matter is that these immigrants are God fearing, hard working, family loving Children of God who reflect the values of our founding fathers and embrace the tenets of the American Constitution, The Declaration of Independence and the Bill of Rights. Moreover, our desire is for every immigrant in America to become a productive citizen, master the English language, embrace the core values of the American idea and realize the American Dream

Finally, we understand that every day that passes without Comprehensive Immigration Reform adds tarnish to the soul of our Nation. The question arises, can this nation be saved. Let us save this nation, not by providing amnesty but by providing an earned pathway to citizenship. In the name of Justice, in the Name of righteousness, in the Name of The Divine, pass comprehensive immigration reform. By doing so we will protect our borders, protect families, and protect our values and in the end we protect the American Dream.