



A letter from clergy to President-elect Obama

December 16, 2008

Dear President-Elect Obama:

We congratulate you on your election, which is truly historic and inspiring, and which we welcome as a victory for peace and justice for all people in our country and planet.

Over the past several years we have witnessed savage and inhuman attacks on the immigrant community in our country. These attacks and the hatred that they have inspired have brought out the very worst instincts from some politicians, the media and from some citizens.

These attacks have been initiated by our government against hard-working people who have come here to help their families survive—because economic circumstances in their own countries are so desperate. The raids by Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) at factories and homes at all hours of the day and night are a violation of human and civil rights and serve no constructive purpose.

What we have witnessed is that the police action of ICE against immigrants has divided the community, instilled fear in our streets, disrupted the everyday life of good people and separated family members, innocent of any crime, from one another. The confusing and secretive detention of those arrested has further complicated the situation. As clergy concerned for our people we would be negligent of our spiritual duties if we didn't speak out against these unjust government policies and practices.

We understand and support the need to apprehend and arrest individuals who are responsible for felonies and other serious crimes. The enforcement of just laws is necessary for public safety and the common good. But the arrest of serious criminals is not what we have observed and heard about in the arrest and detention of immigrants in Massachusetts, and in other states around the country.

We the undersigned urge that when you become our president in January 2009, that you declare a moratorium on immigration raids in the United States, until our nation can implement a comprehensive and just reform of our immigration laws. It is our hope that such reform will make immigration raids obsolete. Until then, we believe that raids on the immigrant community are unjust, unnecessary, and counter-productive.

Signed:

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The Most Rev. Filipe C. Texeira, OFSJC, Immigration Pastoral Center Inc., Brockton MA

Rev. Robert J. Mark, First Presbyterian Church, Waltham, MA
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Rev. Karen L. Peters, Bethany First United Methodist Church, Roslindale MA
Rabbi Or N. Rose, Hebrew College, Newton Centre MA
Rev. Gordon Sloan, First Baptist Church, Newton Centre MA
Rev. Jeremy Smith, First Church of Winthrop, United Methodist, Winthrop MA
The Rev. Daniel Velez-Rivera, Curate, Grace Episcopal Church/Iglesia de Gracia, Salem MA
Imam Abdullah Faaruuq, Temple for the Praising of Allah, Roxbury MA
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