

Grassroots Organizations Lobby Congress To Stop Deporting U.S.-Born Children's Undocumented Parents

By Maira Garcia

Pro-immigrant grassroots organizations are renewing their efforts to convince Congress to stop the deportation of undocumented parents with U.S.-born children.

Members of groups such as the New York-based Families for Freedom and the Illinois-based *La Familia Latina Unida* and *Pueblo Sin Fronteras* brought dozens of children in that situation to the nation's capital July 17.



GUTIERREZ

"Why should four million children suffer because of the shortcomings of the Senate," Rev. Walter Coleman, pastor of the Adalberto United Methodist Church in Chicago, said.

"Our nation has allowed and therefore promoted a system of undocumented labor for decades," he added.

Coleman has gained national attention for providing refuge since August 2006 to undocumented mother Elvira Arellano, who is avoiding deportation orders by staying at his

church.

Her U.S.-born son, Saúl, was part of the convoy.

The groups urged during a press conference in front of the Supreme Court that it hear a case filed by the Florida-based American Fraternity on behalf of 500 children with parents who have been deported.

Group members also lobbied for passage of a bill (HR 1176) by Rep. José Serrano (D-N.Y.) that grants immigration judges the discretion to stop the deportation of an undocumented person who has a U.S. citizen child.

Emma Lozano, director of *Centro Sin Fronteras*, said initiatives that would re-implement a law that allows undocumented persons to stay in the United States while they wait for a green card would help keep families together.

"What is happening is a crisis in the United States," she said. "Many of the stories are the same; one more horrible than the other."

Group leaders met with Reps. Luis Gutiérrez (D-Ill.) and John Conyers (D-Mich.), as well as with aides of House Speaker Nancy Pelosi (D-Calif.) during their visit.

King: Disparity Rates are 'Astounding'

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ment figures for women are considerably lower than for men, but the patterns of disparity are similar.

"The current rates are astounding," King said. "These disparity problems stem from poverty, lack of opportunities, and continuing racial inequalities."

King also noted many of these people live in disadvantaged neighborhoods with higher crime rates and higher police presence.



TRASVINA

States typically associated with greater concentrations of Hispanics reported incarceration disparities below the national ratio. Among them: California (1.7), Texas (1.2), Florida (0.6) and Nevada (1.0).

Hawaii (0.4), Louisiana (0.5), and West Virginia (0.5) had the lowest Hispanic-to-white ratio.

The study attributed incarceration rates not just to inconsistent patterns of arrest but to laws and sentencing policies.

For example, it claimed that aggressive anti-drug laws disproportionately affect "low-level" blacks and Hispanics.

"Reforms need to be made to improve general living conditions and bring opportu-

nities to fix the situation," King added. "Emphasis should be less on mandatory sentencing and more on rehabilitation and case-by-case consideration."

The Sentencing Project's study follows a June report by the U.S. Department of Justice's Bureau of Justice Statistics which indicated that nearly 2% of Hispanic males in the general population were incarcerated as of June 2006.

The Sentencing Project report is available at www.sentencingproject.org.

Sutton: 'Compeán and Ramos Crossed the Line'

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ing a shiny object in his hands when he was shot.

U.S. Attorney Johnny Sutton, whose office prosecuted the agents, defended the convictions by saying it was not about illegal immigration or drug trafficking but the rule of law and the agents' attempted cover-up.

Both agents are serving their sentences in solitary confinement to protect against retaliation by inmates.

"Agents Compeán and Ramos crossed the line. They are not heroes," Sutton said. "They deliberately shot



COMPEAN & WIFE

Latino Groups Boost Effort To Increase Citizenship And Voter Registration

By Maggie Causgrove

With the collapse of a comprehensive immigration bill this year in the U.S. Senate, Hispanic organizations are renewing their efforts to boost the number of Latinos applying for citizenship and registering to vote.

Organizers are revamping the *¡Ya es hora Ciudadanía!* (Now is the time – Citizenship!) campaign started in January, and launching a new drive, *Ya es hora!* (Now is the time!) to increase the number of Hispanics registering to vote.

The first campaign has helped some 30,000 Latinos nationwide apply for citizenship since January, according to campaign organizer Marcelo Gaete.

Gaete, senior director of programs for the National Association of Latino and Elected Officials in Washington, D.C., told Weekly Report the campaign has launched "an unprecedented effort" that he hopes will continue to be "a motivation for immigrants."

Besides NALEO, other organizations involved in the campaigns include the National Council of *La Raza*, the We are America Alliance, the Service Employees International Union, the Coalition for Comprehensive Immigration Reform and media company *Univisión*. Gaete said an additional 450 local organizations will be helping spread the word.

The second campaign aims to target some 500,000 unregistered, newly registered and young Latino voters in 11 key states. NCLR president Janet Murguía stated this effort "will give Latinos the key to victory in 2008."

For more information, visit www.cirnow.org.

an unarmed man in the back without justification, destroyed evidence to cover it up and lied about it. A jury heard the facts and voted to convict."

But Feinstein considered the case to be one "of prosecutorial overreaction."

In addition, she questioned whether the decision to grant immunity and a "humanitarian visa" to Osbaldo Aldrete-Dávila, the shooting victim, in exchange for his testimony was properly handled. He reportedly abandoned a van carrying more than 700 pounds of drugs as he fled to Mexico

"I have a hard time dealing with the idea that there was a drug dealer coming back and forth into U.S. territory without any form of surveillance," said Feinstein, adding that Aldrete-Dávila was not an "amateur," but a "criminal."