



Interfaith Communities United For Justice And Peace

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Religious Communities must stop blessing war and violence!

Statement of Adalberto United Methodist Church on the Occasion of the Filing of a Federal Lawsuit on Behalf of Children of Undocumented Immigrants by Rev. Walter L. Coleman – Adopted September 18, 2006

The valiant, courageous struggle of Elvira Arellano today begins a new chapter in the national discussion of immigration reform – not only in the courts, but on the street corners, workplaces and churches of this nation, anew chapter in the national discussion that must soon reach to the halls of congress.

Today we affirm the rights of the children and families of the undocumented. In doing so, we assert the responsibility of this nation for the system of undocumented labor it has sanctioned, participated in and profited from for over a century.

Today we assert that this responsibility reaches to the children who were born here and the families that were formed here.

Every agency of government and every sector of private industry – and indeed – every U. S. citizen has participated in and benefited from this system of undocumented labor.

The government left the borders open for decades, knowing full well that millions were entering illegally, because the nation wanted their labor. Elvira Arellano was not beamed across the border by Captain Kirk; she walked slowly through a simple turnstile.

U. S. companies accepted their labor, knowing full well their ID's were invalid, because these companies wanted the labor of hard workers who had no legal rights to protect themselves and their standard of living. The U. S. government collected their taxes and all U. S. citizens accepted their contribution to our sick and ailing social security fund.

When NAFTA and other U. S. sponsored neoliberal economic policies made life impossible for the poor of Latin America and the Caribbean, the numbers increased dramatically. At first U. S. companies licked their lips at the growing pool of unprotected, cheap labor that allowed them to compete profitably in the global economy. But then the ugly face of white supremacy raised its head.

While politicians began to worry that the red states would turn brown. Others worried that their white euro centric culture and language might be changed to be more inclusive. Like Pat Buchanan, they harkened back to the times when the U. S. was 89% white and began a drive to torture and make fearful the lives of the undocumented and their children in order to protect their imaginary, isolated islands of privilege.

Elvira Arellano admits that she broke a law. She came before a court, admitted her guilt and served her sentence. She took responsibility for her actions, even though they were only the actions of survival and of a

mother providing for her child. We should recall in Luke, chapter 6, that Jesus and his followers broke another hypocritical law when as hungry travelers they ate the food reserved for the priests on the Sabbath. Now it is time for the nation to take its responsibility. The children that have been born here and the families that have been formed here part of the economic, civic and religious life of this country. They are here because this nation sanctioned, participated in and profited from a system of undocumented labor for over a century.

The broken system must be changed. No worker should be without legal protections and rights in this nation. Neither can a nation protect its people when it does not know who is within its borders.

Yet in fixing this broken system we must remember that a nation that does not take responsibility for its actions is a doomed nation. We must take responsibility for the children who were born here and the families that were formed here.

I am not a lawyer. I am not a politician. I am a pastor. I refer you again to the Gospel of Luke, chapter six:

“How can you say to your neighbor, Friend, let me take out the speck in your eye," when you yourself do not see the log in your own eye? You hypocrites, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly how to take the speck out of your neighbor's eye."

God has protected Elvira from deportation so that the light of truth and love might come into this debate and replace both the vicious self-degradation of hate and the arrogant self-righteousness of paternalism.

We demand an immediate moratorium on all raids, arrests, deportations and separation of families until the broken law is fixed and the nation takes responsibility for its system of undocumented labor.