

# Environment and the Anti-Immigrant Movement in Oregon

*Talking points from the Center for New Community*

- ◆ The organized anti-immigrant movement has always used environmental arguments to promote its bigoted agenda. That's why we need the partnership of environmentalists who understand the intersection between their work, racial justice, and immigrant rights, to help stand up against the anti-immigrant movement's hate.
- ◆ The most aggressive anti-immigrant groups have consistently shown up at Earth Day events and have put out ads blaming immigrants for California's drought. Most recently, the Federation for American Immigration Reform (FAIR), the group that sits at the apex of the organized anti-immigrant movement and is widely recognized as a hate group, released a lengthy report ostensibly about environmental sustainability.
- ◆ The anti-immigrant movement has long used environmentalism as a strategy to greenwash their bigotry, make their work appear more mainstream, and appeal to a broader group of supporters.
- ◆ In Oregon, the dominant anti-immigrant group, OFIR, even uses a logo including a tree and a tag line ("advocating for an environmentally sustainable level of immigration") to appeal to environmentalists.
- ◆ The anti-immigrant movement's founder was John Tanton, an avowed white nationalist and a committed environmentalist. Tanton claimed that immigrants (particularly immigrants of color) would jeopardize the preservation of the U.S. environment for the use of a majority white population.
- ◆ Tanton's overriding concern was limiting the population of people of color in the U.S. He even founded an organization to re-brand the eugenics movement (it failed), but focused mainly on limiting the U.S. population of people of color by reducing immigration because he found that to be more politically feasible.
- ◆ The anti-immigrant movement's scapegoating of immigrants is reminiscent of the nativism central to the formation of the mainstream environmental movement in the U.S. (Ex: John Muir, Henry Osborne, and others)

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- ◆ Today, the anti-immigrant movement implicitly blames environmental issues on communities of color, when these communities are actually the most vulnerable to the negative impacts of climate change and environmental degradation. In fact, many people who migrate to the U.S. have been forced to leave their homes because of environmental harms in their home countries.
- ◆ By blaming immigrants, the anti-immigrant movement gives corporations and government actors a pass on the environmental harms that they perpetrate.
- ◆ If the anti-immigrant movement was serious about environmentalism, we would see its leaders advocating for policies to slow climate change or reduce the devastating environmental impacts of border militarization--but we don't.
- ◆ Though today's anti-immigrant movement has learned to be more covert about its extremism, it hardly hides its racism or its attempts to foster fear of immigrants. During the movement's ongoing attempts to greenwash its hate, we hope you'll join us in calling them out and standing with communities of color against threats to the climate, threats to Oregon's environment, and environmental racism.

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