

Mainstreaming Hate: The Anti-Immigrant Movement in the U.S.

In the ten years since ADL's previous report on the growing legitimization of extreme anti-immigrant groups, these groups have gained even more widespread acceptance, particularly by government officials. Heartened by politicians' and political candidates' attendance at anti-immigration rallies, anti-immigrant state and federal policies and legitimized by invitations to testify before Congress, anti-immigrant activists and groups believe they are successfully transitioning into mainstream acceptance. They have taken advantage of this situation by intensifying their efforts to appeal to a general audience. Major TV news networks help by providing a platform, and broad viewership, for anti-immigration leaders to frame their messages as reasonable and valid. The mainstreaming of these groups and their ideas only makes that compromise more elusive. Reasonable debate is impossible when xenophobic views steamroll legitimate proposals.

Before the extreme ideas of the anti-immigrant movement fully take root, the government, media and general public must take the necessary steps to make sure that the demonization of immigrants and the bigotry that underlie it do not become further entrenched in our society. These ideas should not become part of the acceptable discourse in America's diverse and pluralistic society. To accomplish this, ADL recommends the following concrete steps be taken by various sectors of society:

ENACT POLICIES THAT PROVIDE LEGISLATIVE AND LEGAL PROTECTIONS FOR IMMIGRANTS AND REFUGEES

- America's immigration system is broken. In the short term, Congress must work together in a bipartisan fashion to pass legislation that protects immigrants and refugees from racist and xenophobic policies. These should include laws to prevent family separations, indefinite detention of families at the border, provide a pathway to citizenship for Dreamers, protect Temporary Protected Status (TPS) for individuals from countries in crisis, prevents targeting immigrants and refugees from Muslim majority countries and allows for a robust refugee resettlement program.
- In the long term, it is vital that lawmakers, advocates and the administration work together to fix America's

broken immigration system. We must work towards comprehensive immigration reform that provides a pathway to citizenship for the more than 11 million undocumented individuals currently residing in the U.S. and reforms the current legal immigration system. The current system has created a vulnerable underclass of people living in our communities who lack meaningful rights under our laws and are subject to exploitation while they help to power our economy. Without comprehensive reform, we continue to create fodder for extremists and leave the door open for anti-immigrant groups to continue to push xenophobic and racist policies.

IMPROVE FEDERAL RESPONSE TO HATE CRIMES

- The federal government has an essential leadership role to play in confronting hate crimes, extremism, and acts of violence motivated by prejudice. It cannot do so if it scapegoats immigrants, refugees, and other marginalized communities through policy and executive action. At a time of increased incidents of anti-immigrant and anti-refugee bias, harassment, and hate violence, the administration's policies and actions have a direct impact on whether individuals will trust police enough to report crimes, including hate crimes. Special attention needs to be paid to strong enforcement of hate crime laws, underreporting of hate crimes by law enforcement to the FBI and by communities, and training for law enforcement on recognizing and responding to hate crimes.

BUILD TRUST BETWEEN LAW ENFORCEMENT AND IMMIGRANT COMMUNITIES

- Law enforcement agencies should work to foster trust with immigrant communities in order to ensure public safety for all. This should include so called "sanctuary" or "welcoming" policies that allows immigrant victims and witnesses to report crimes and cooperate with investigations and prosecutions without fear of deportation. Against a backdrop of federal anti-immigrant policies, both undocumented and documented immigrants justifiably fear that police will report their immigration information. Local law enforcement must work with communities and enact policies to prevent individuals from avoiding contact with law enforcement.

- The federal government should assist – not impede – local enforcement in fostering trust with local law enforcement. Instead, its attempt to impose immigration enforcement-related conditions on local law enforcement’s ability to receive federal public safety grants seems deliberately aimed at undoing these efforts and undermines local law enforcement’s ability to effectively prevent crimes, hate crimes and extremism targeting vulnerable communities.

CITIES AND TOWNS SHOULD WORK TO BE MORE WELCOMING TO IMMIGRANTS

- As the federal government implements additional and continues policies that marginalize and attack immigrants, cities and towns across the country should lead with policies of inclusion and acceptance. Cities and towns should adopt so-called “sanctuary” or “welcoming” policies that limit local resources used to enforce federal immigration laws and sends a welcoming and protective message to all community members. Cities and towns should take steps to prevent federal immigration enforcement action in “sensitive” locations like schools, hospitals and courthouses and through tactics that cause deep anxiety and fear in immigrant communities and further marginalize immigrants. Cities and towns can also develop programs to support undocumented residents and refugees. Municipal ID programs, for example, allow all immigrants to access important public benefits even without a driver’s license. Cities and towns have an important role to play in pushing back against federal anti-immigrant policies and the rise of anti-immigrant extremism by denouncing hate and being explicit in their support of inclusion of immigrants and refugees in their communities.
- Local and state officials must share their concerns about current federal policies with their federal representatives, encourage them to address the policies that harm their citizens and develop and pass comprehensive reforms to the immigration system.

DENOUNCE ANTI-IMMIGRANT BIGOTRY, RACISM AND XENOPHOBIA

- The President, members of Congress, public figures, federal agencies and law enforcement officials must use their bully pulpit to publicly and immediately denounce hatred and bigotry. Failure to do so emboldens anti-immigrant and hate groups and legitimizes their activities and rhetoric. Additionally, Congress must stop inviting members of known anti-immigrant groups to testify in hearings and forums. It lends them credibility and provides a platform for espousing anti-immigration extremist rhetoric.

PROVIDE STUDENTS WITH TOOLS TO COMBAT HATRED AND BIGOTRY AND PROTECT IMMIGRANT STUDENTS

- Congress and the Department of Education should increase federal funding for inclusive school anti-bias education, and properly crafted anti-bullying, cyberbullying, and harassment education and training initiatives. Every state has a bullying prevention law, but more must be done to ensure implementation of the policies and programs required by these laws. Schools must ensure equal education opportunities for all students, regardless of immigration status, and should seek to promote policies and activities that celebrate our nation’s diversity and inclusivity and ensure that all students feel safe and welcome.

EXPAND DIALOGUE BETWEEN CIVIL SOCIETY AND TECH SECTOR

- In the last several years, civil society and the technology sector have partnered on a range of projects to ensure public sector approaches adapt for the digital era. Policymakers should pursue genuine partnerships with the technology sector to ensure the government can better counter extremism and bigotry online, and to help technology companies find solutions to emerging challenges. Tech companies must continue to improve their terms of service, especially in relation to bigotry and extremism. This commitment should include creating strong and robust prohibitions on extremist content. Platforms should fine-tune their approaches to dealing with such extremism. In addition to having clear and transparent terms of services, platforms must vigorously enforce these guidelines for the benefit of their users.

Read the Full Report online:

<https://www.adl.org/the-anti-immigrant-movement-in-the-us>