

February 10, 2011

PRESS RELEASE – UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST ASSOCIATION

UUA AND U.S. FAITH COMMUNITY SPEAK OUT AGAINST INHUMANE IMMIGRATION ENFORCEMENT

Standing on the Side of Love, Interfaith Delegation Demand That Obama Administration Halt ICE ACCESS Program

WASHINGTON, D.C. – The Standing on the Side of Love campaign (SSL), in cooperation with an extensive interfaith delegation, today met with representatives from the U.S. Department of Homeland Security to voice their concerns for communities torn apart by inhumane immigration enforcement policies.

Standing on the Side of Love is a social justice campaign of the Unitarian Universalist Association (UUA). **The UUA, working in concert with more than two dozen faith-based organizations and denominations and nearly 400 clergy members, is calling on the Obama Administration to halt the ICE ACCESS program** (Immigration and Customs Enforcement Agreements of Cooperation in Communities to Enhance Safety and Security).

To this end, members of this powerful interfaith group have signed onto a letter (*attached*) that points out the devastating impact on families and children as a direct result of ICE ACCESS.

Signatories met with Andrew Lorenzen-Strait, senior public engagement officer, and Lindsey Cole, outreach coordinator of the Office of State, Local, and Tribal Coordination at the Department of Homeland Security to personally present the letter.

“We need to stand on the side of love with all families, especially immigrant families,” says SSL Campaign Manager Dan Furmansky. **“Our campaign will continue to shine the spotlight on the inhumanity of our nation’s broken immigration system** and ask Congress and the administration to harness the moral courage to create a pathway to citizenship for millions of people living in this country.”

The presenting delegation, led by Taquiena Boston, Director of the Washington Center of the UUA, included representatives of United Methodist Church, United Church of Christ, Mennonite Central Committee, Church World Service, Franciscan Action Network, and Religious Action Center for Reform Judaism.

“We are witnessing a human rights crisis in America, marked by the unconscionable treatment of immigrants and the destruction of families through ICE ACCESS,” says Boston. “So we are calling on our government to provide sensible immigration reform and an end to unproductive strategies that criminalize immigrant communities.”

Also bearing witness to the brutal impact of ICE ACCESS are Unitarian Universalist Rev. Linda Olson Peebles and Rev. Carlton Elliot Smith, both of Virginia, and Fr. Jacek Orzechowski, OFM, of Maryland, among others.

“The faith community has repeatedly asked Congress to pass humane immigration reform that prioritizes family unity,” says Rev. Peebles, minister at the Unitarian Universalist Church of Arlington, Va.

“Policies that address the needs of immigrant communities and provide a path to legalization are what are needed. **We do not need more enforcement policies that create fear and divisions and tear at the fabric of all our communities.**”

The delegation hopes that the letter will begin a civil, open dialogue about the immediate need for comprehensive, humane immigration reform. It states in part. **“In times of uncertainty and crisis, we define who we are as a nation by how we treat the most vulnerable within our communities.”**

Earlier in the day, faith leaders attended a congressional hearing sponsored by **Rep. Raul Grijalva (D-AZ)** about the unintended consequences of ICE ACCESS programs on women and children, especially the 4 million children born in the U.S. with at least one unauthorized immigrant parent.

You can find the faith leaders letter to President Obama here:

http://www.standingonthesideoflove.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/02/faith_leaders_to_obama_02102011.pdf.

###

More information:

The UUA <<http://www.uua.org/>> is a faith community of more than 1,000 self-governing congregations that bring to the world a vision of religious freedom, tolerance, and social justice. Unitarian Universalism is a theologically diverse <<http://www.uua.org/visitors/theologicalperspectives/index.shtml>> , non-creedal religion in which members support one another in the search for truth and meaning.

Standing on the Side of Love <<http://www.standingonthesideoflove.org/>> is a social justice campaign sponsored by the UUA that seeks to harness love’s power to stop oppression. For more information, including recent press releases and news articles, please visit the UUA press room <<http://www.uua.org/pressroom/index.shtml>> .

Contact:

Taquienna Boston, Director, Washington Center of the UUA
1100 G Street NW; Suite 800
Washington, DC 20005 P
Email: tboston@uua.org
Phone: (202) 393-2255 x18
Cell: (617) 763-7181

Rev. Linda Olson Peebles, Minister, UU Church of Arlington, VA
4444 Arlington Blvd, Arlington, Virginia 22204
Phone: (703) 892-2565
Cell: (703) 927-8576