



News Briefing Remarks
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Janet Murguía
National Council of La Raza

As some of you may know, NCLR is the largest Hispanic civil rights and advocacy group in the country. We were founded in 1968 and are now celebrating our 40th anniversary. We are an American institution whose mission is to create opportunities for the 45 million Hispanics in the U.S. We represent nearly 300 Affiliates – which are community-based service organizations that provide education, health care, housing, and economic empowerment opportunities.

The reason I am before you today is to talk about an important issue affecting our community. We are confronting a very negative environment due in large part to the failure of the President and the Congress to address the immigration issue.

The result is a new strain of hate that has emerged. It is open and ugly, and it demonizes all Latinos in the ongoing debate on immigration.

The reason we are here today is because hate groups and extremists have taken over the immigration debate in an unprecedented wave of hate.

- Hate groups and extremists no longer occupy the fringe in American politics.
- Their rhetoric has been adopted by many in the mainstream media.
- Their policy positions frame the political discourse.
- Their people are too often welcomed by the media and presidential candidates.

Let me be specific. I'd like to offer three examples (but there are more).

Dan Stein of the Federation for American Immigration Reform (FAIR):

According to the Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC):

- FAIR is the creation of John Tanton, a man who remains on FAIR's board and operates a racist publishing company. Tanton once compared immigrants to "bacteria."
- FAIR has employed members of white supremacist groups in key positions.
- FAIR has promoted racist conspiracy theories.
- FAIR has accepted more than \$1 million from the Pioneer Fund, a racist foundation devoted to eugenics and to proving a connection between race and IQ.

Chris Simcox, cofounder of the Minutemen:

According to SPLC, Simcox was convicted in 2003 of carrying a weapon into a national park while searching for undocumented immigrants.

That year, he was quoted by an Orange County newspaper saying, “So far, we’ve had restraint, but I’m afraid that restraint is wearing thin. Take heed of our weapons because we’re going to defend our borders by any means necessary.”

Jim Gilchrist, also a cofounder of the Minutemen, was videotaped at an anti-immigration rally proclaiming he is “proud to be a vigilante.”

These three people have been on national cable network television at least 110 times over the past three years. That doesn’t count print. That doesn’t count radio. That doesn’t count local television.

- Rarely is their status as a hate or vigilante group acknowledged or challenged.
- Typically, they are offered a cloak of respectability as “anti-immigrant spokesperson” or “neighborhood watch” programs.
- Rarely do they face opposition from an opposing side.

I want to take a moment to talk about the immigration debate: It is a serious issue requiring serious discussion. We welcome that debate. We share many of the concerns that Americans have about our broken immigration system, including the need to secure our borders.

And, let me be clear, most Americans who are concerned about our borders do not carry or harbor extremist views. This surge of hate is being driven by a relatively small, vocal, and extreme segment of society.

As this debate has moved from Congress to the states and now to the presidential debates, the fury and intensity has continued. And it has become more recognizable. This debate is no longer about substantive policy approaches. This debate is about hate.

And if letting these people get on the air unchecked isn’t bad enough, many of the network talk show hosts parrot hate speech openly and abundantly on the air.

Again, I offer three examples:

CNN’s Lou Dobbs, who nightly provides a platform for vilifying immigrants on his “Broken Borders” segment, has said, “I support the Minuteman Project and the fine Americans who make it up in all they’ve accomplished, fully, relentlessly, and proudly.”

On his program on April 14, 2005 Dobbs reported that, “The invasion of illegal aliens is threatening the health of many Americans,” and introduced correspondent Christine Romans, who grossly inflated statistics regarding immigrants and leprosy, citing “there have been 7,000 cases in the past three years.” The truth is, there have been 7,000 cases

in the past 30 years and there has been no correlation to immigrants according to the Department of Health and Human Services.

Despite being corrected, Dobbs has continued to stand by his reporting.

MSNBC on-air commentator Pat Buchanan published a book last summer called *Day of Reckoning*. He got a free ride from the cable news media to go on a hateful tirade about immigration.

In November, on *Hannity & Colmes*, Buchanan said, “You've got a wholesale invasion, the greatest invasion in human history, coming across your southern border, changing the composition and character of your country.”

When Pat Buchanan talks about this southern invasion, he's not just talking about newcomers – he includes first, second, third, and fourth generation Americans: he's talking about me.

And let me assure you that in his book he makes it quite clear that he feels differently about immigrants who have come from White European countries. He can write as many books as he wants, but he shouldn't be given a free pass to put his bigoted views on the airwaves unchecked and unfiltered.

On June 28, **CNN's Glenn Beck** jokingly offered a one-step solution to the immigration and the energy crises on his radio program. He read a proposed ad for a "giant refinery" that produces "Mexinol," a fuel made from the bodies of illegal immigrants coming here from Mexico to find work.

He thought it was funny. To a Latino, this is outrageous and offensive. But it should be offensive to everyone.

They are far from being alone. Bill O'Reilly, Michelle Malkin, and Hannity & Colmes regularly join in the nightly harangue.

It is no wonder that presidential and congressional candidates have leapt on the bandwagon.

- Suddenly, the immigration “threat” has eclipsed Iraq, Pakistan, health care, and the economy over the past four months of the debate.
- Ads reminiscent of the 1988 Willie Horton ad, which denigrated the African American community, have already been run by Tom Tancredo to demonize Latinos. They depict all Latinos as criminals, all Latinos as rapists, all Latinos as gang members and terrorists.
- Mike Huckabee accepted the endorsement of Jim Gilchrist and called it “providential.”

All of this is clearly over the line. As a civil rights organization, we understand how difficult it is to draw the line on free speech, but when free speech is abused and transformed into hate speech a line must be drawn.

It is time to take hate out of the immigration debate.

- First, we're putting the cable news networks on notice:

Specifically, we're asking the three cable news networks – Fox, CNN, and MSNBC – to take hate and vigilante groups off the air and to clean up the rhetoric of their own commentators or take them out of their chairs.

- Second, we're putting candidates of all parties on notice to renounce hate speech and sever their ties to hate and vigilante groups:

Specifically, we're asking Governor Mike Huckabee to sever all ties and renounce his relationship with Jim Gilchrist.

- Third, we are launching a campaign called “Wave of Hope.” This campaign will educate Americans about the rise of hate speech against Latinos and the corresponding rise of hate crimes and violence we are experiencing.

It includes:

- An anti-hate website entitled “wecanstopthehate.org”
- Ongoing collaboration with other minority groups to confront hate speech
- Working with media networks and candidates to recognize and eliminate their hate speech altogether
- Asking candidates to sign a pledge to elevate the debate and avoid hate speech
- Asking all media to clean up “hate mail” from its web postings

To Latinos, these are not idle concerns.

- The Department of Justice reports that hate crimes against Latinos are up 23% this year nationwide, and have doubled in California. This is no coincidence.
- The Southern Poverty Law Center and the Anti-Defamation League have documented dozens of physical assaults on Latinos, most of whom are U.S. citizens, by people spouting anti-immigrant rhetoric.

Last May, I spoke at a pro-immigration rally in Washington, DC. That day, Minuteman member Tyler Froatz was arrested for assaulting an organizer. He was carrying a Taser stun gun and pepper spray, and he had a rifle, ammunition, and maps in his car. A search of his apartment turned up more than 15 guns, a Molotov cocktail, a hand grenade, more than 1,000 rounds of ammunition, and other weapons.

A couple of days later, one of our Affiliates in the Washington suburbs was set on fire in an act that investigators determined was arson.

To our community, these are not abstract political issues associated with the immigration policy debate. It's personal. It's intolerable. And it has to end.

We are grateful to have allies in this endeavor, the Leadership Conference on Civil Rights, the Southern Poverty Law Center, the Anti-Defamation League, Media Matters, and MALDEF, who have helped immeasurably with the development of this initiative. On our website (www.wecanstopthehate.org) there will be a series of videos to help put this current generation of hate speech into context. I'd like to show you one of them, made in conjunction with the Anti-Defamation League, on code words of hate.

While we hope that people of good will work with us to take hate out of the debate, we recognize that ultimately our community will have to harness its own growing economic and political power. Latinos will represent \$1 trillion in buying power by the end of this decade and also represent a growing political force. Here today to talk about that growing political power is Cecilia Muñoz, NCLR Senior Vice President.