



A JUST INTEGRATION SOLUTION: HOW EVANGELICALS AND IMMIGRANTS CAN PARTNER IN HEALING OUR NATION.

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The topic of immigration not only represents a wedge issue dividing communities, political parties and electoral calculations but also, immigration stands as the proverbial elephant in the room; the evangelical room. Evangelicals in America may very well serve as *the most viable constituency* as our nation once again discusses immigration reform while simultaneously determining the outcome of 12 million current undocumented residents.

Accordingly, in order to present a sustainable and viable solution to the immigration query, we must first contextualize a factual narrative of the debate. When Congressmen James Sensenbrenner and Tom Tancredo presented anti-immigrant legislation without addressing family reunification or the fate of the current undocumented residents, the rhetoric quickly removed the grave clothes surrounding the issue of immigration and in actuality prompted a series of more in depth queries. Why didn't America enforce current immigration laws? Why do businesses continue to hire undocumented individuals? How can our borders, post 9/11, be so porous? Is America becoming too Latino? What does it mean to the future of our nation when by the end of the 21st Century, our ethnic cultural composition will be majority non Anglo Saxon? How does one define an American? Is American nativism reconcilable with evangelical beliefs?

As with many of today's divisive issues, Bible-believing Americans carry a moral and biblical responsibility to analyze and offer

facilitative platforms, which activate the ministry of reconciliation.

Evangelicals and Christians committed to truth and the spreading of the Gospel must incorporate prophetic witness that heals communities, ushers in peace and exalts righteousness and justice. For that matter, while uberconservative solutions addressing immigration focus exclusively on border protection and deportation by attrition while liberal solutions advocate for amnesty; Christians must offer a better way, a narrow way, a biblical solution to the immigration debate, a just integration solution.

A Just Integration Solution reconciles Romans 13, adherence to the rule of law with Leviticus 19, treating the stranger amongst us as one of our own. As Christians, we stand committed to the message of the Cross. However, that cross is both vertical and horizontal, salvation and transformation, ethos and pathos, Kingdom and society, faith and public policy, Covenant and community, righteousness and justice, Romans 13 and Leviticus 19.

For example, a biblical vertical and horizontal Leviticus 19, Romans 13 solution must include the following elements; first, border protection that puts an end to all illegal immigration including the utilization of infrared, satellite and other technologies in addition to increased border patrols. Second, the creation of a market driven guest worker program and facilitative avenues by which the millions of families already in America that lack the legal status can earn such status in a manner that reflects the Judeo Christian Value system this nation was founded upon. Third, an earned citizenship element that will enable current undocumented residents without a criminal record to earn citizenship status by going to the back of the line as it pertains to citizenship applicants, admonition of guilt with corresponding financial penalty, acquiring civic and language proficiency all while serving the local

community.

But here lies the challenge; can we reconcile Leviticus 19 and Romans 13? Can we repudiate xenophobic and nativist rhetoric, push back on the extremes from both the left and the right and converge around the nexus of the Center Cross where righteousness meets justice, border security meets compassion and common sense meets common ground?

The answer requires two communities to arise and exemplify the prophetic potential embedded in each; evangelicals and immigrants. Evangelicals must repudiate nativism and embrace a Kingdom culture multi-ethnic canopy of righteousness and justice where biblical truth trumps political affiliation and allegiance stands exclusively reserved not to the donkey or the elephant but rather to the agenda of the Lamb.

On the other hand, immigrants must understand that what makes one an American is nothing less than an allegiance and covenant with the values of our Constitution, Declaration of Independence and Bill of Rights. Internalization and adherence to those values obligates the immigrant to embrace English as our language, focus on our commonalities, and respect the symbols of our Republic including the American flag, while simultaneously assimilating into the fullness of Life, Liberty and the Pursuit of Happiness, the American idea.

Finally, we understand that every day that passes without Comprehensive Immigration Reform adds tarnish to the soul of our nation. The question arises, can this nation be saved. Let us save this nation, not by providing amnesty but by providing a Just Immigration Solution based on biblical truth and covered with the spirit of compassion.