



THE ANTI-IMMIGRANT LOBBY IN CALIFORNIA: A VOCAL FRINGE EMBOLDENED

Center for
New Community

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INTRODUCTION

Today, California has some of the most welcoming policies toward immigrants in the country, and a solidly pro-immigrant electorate to match. The vast majority of Californians want to see a path to citizenship for the undocumented, and are in favor of new state and local policies to protect the rights of undocumented immigrants. Most Californians similarly oppose the Trump Administration’s travel ban from Muslim-majority countries, branded the “Muslim ban” because of its discriminatory intent and impact. Fully half of all Californians now worry that someone they know will be deported.

Yet California has a long history of nativism, stretching back to the deeply anti-immigrant Proposition 187, a referendum passed in 1994 to prohibit undocumented immigrants from using a broad range of public services, and beyond. After the Chinese Exclusion Act was passed in 1882, California adopted a raft of unconstitutional laws that were even more exclusionary.

The state has seen incredible change over the past two decades since Prop. 187. Immigrant-led organizing has brought about strong protections for immigrant rights, and now California is poised to lead the nation by adopting policies that protect all Californians.

Unfortunately, the ghosts of the past remain. Anti-immigrant groups in California are politically marginalized due to their extremist views, but they remain driven to inject their agenda into mainstream political debates. Some of these groups camouflage their extremism in order to influence policy, concealing their nativist or white nationalist goals and flouting

the statewide consensus in support of immigrant rights.

We have seen how dangerous this virulent racism can be. Hate violence targeting immigrants and Muslims based on xenophobia has skyrocketed, though only a small percent of incidents are covered in the mainstream news. California-based nativist groups like We the People Rising and Californians for Population Stabilization are actively promoting xenophobia through radio ads and at town halls.

In late May 2017, a white supremacist in Portland killed two people and seriously injured a third amid his anti-Muslim attack on two young girls. The month prior, another white man who was a member of a white supremacist Facebook group murdered a black University of Maryland student only days before his graduation. In February 2017, a white man shot two Indian engineers after hurling racist and anti-immigrant slurs at them. The white supremacist group Identity Evropa was founded in California in March 2016, and has focused its efforts in the state, while also supporting chapters across the country, primarily on college campuses. Despite making headlines for distributing racist flyers on campuses, the group is very small and primarily internet-based. However, some of Identity Evropa’s most visible California supporters have attended political demonstrations, instigating several violent confrontations in recent months. One Identity Evropa supporter, Parker Anthony Wilson, worked for California’s largest anti-immigrant group until February 2017, when his ties to white nationalism and neo-Nazism were reported by El Tecolote.

The organized anti-immigrant movement, a series of tightly linked groups with the shared goal of drastically limiting immigration and enacting mass round ups of the undocumented population in the United States using xenophobia and racism, may not be directly connected to

each xenophobic attack. But they have certainly seeded—and watered—the hate that makes this violence commonplace.

The modern-day anti-immigrant movement was founded in the late 1970s by an avowed white nationalist and eugenicist named John Tanton. Tanton created, or was closely involved in the founding of the Federation for American Immigration Reform (FAIR), the Center for Immigration Studies (CIS), and NumbersUSA, the three largest anti-immigrant groups. These groups are now primarily responsible for the degree and virulence of nativist sentiment in public debate and public policy nationally.

In 1993, John Tanton explained his motivation for his work in a letter to a colleague as follows: “I’ve come to the point of view that for European-American society and culture to persist requires a European-American majority, and a clear one at that.” This overt racism continues to drive the organized anti-immigrant movement, despite their efforts to feign legitimacy. A recent report from the Southern Poverty Law Center and the Center for New Community found that CIS had distributed white nationalist content to their members over two thousand times.

President Trump’s actions on immigration have largely been guided by nativist groups like FAIR, CIS, and NumbersUSA, and by their former staffers who now hold positions in the Administration. While these virulently anti-immigrant groups previously sought to influence policy through the few Members of Congress who embraced their views, the Trump Administration has now elevated these groups to be key drivers of federal policy from the White House and relevant agencies.

Since taking office, President Trump has placed anti-immigrant individuals in key positions in his cabinet, within the Department of Homeland Security, and the Department of Justice. In



Image source: YouTube.

Founder of the modern-day anti-immigrant movement, John Tanton was an avowed white nationalist and eugenicist. He created a number of nativist organizations with the goal of maintaining a white majority in the United States.

addition to chief strategist Steve Bannon, Attorney General Jeff Sessions, senior advisor Stephen Miller, special assistant Julia Hahn (formerly of Breitbart), and vice-chair to the Commission on Election Integrity Kris Kobach, President Trump has appointed the former Executive Director of FAIR, Julie Kirchner, to be the USCIS Ombudsman, and has placed former CIS staffer Jon Feere within Immigration and Customs Enforcement.

These individuals bring with them their anti-immigrant ideology and the goal of enacting mass roundups of the undocumented, dismantling birthright citizenship, rescinding DACA, banning immigration from Muslim-majority countries, restricting refugee entry, and dramatically reducing the level of authorized immigration into the United States.

Nativist activity in California is led by a small cadre of organizers who are closely associated

with the national anti-immigrant movement. Their efforts also regularly attract support from white supremacist and anti-government militia extremists. Yet despite their small numbers and virulent racism, these groups still work to change public policy and public opinion and are increasingly active in legislative affairs.

This report describes the most active anti-immigrant groups in California, their ties to the national anti-immigrant movement, and their attempts to influence public policy.

NATIONAL ANTI-IMMIGRANT GROUPS IN CALIFORNIA

Center for Immigration Studies

Anti-immigrant groups have long worked to promote a narrative that justified extreme nativist rhetoric and policies based on an imagined danger posed by immigrants. In particular, they have sought to undermine so-called sanctuary cities, a vague designation for jurisdictions with a wide variety of policies ranging from broad police non-cooperation with Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) to simply not complying with unconstitutional detainers.

Key to these efforts to attack cities based on their sanctuary policies has been the Center for Immigration Studies (CIS), one of the pillars of the anti-immigrant movement. CIS is an extremist think tank that manufactures disingenuous research to support bigoted, anti-immigrant policies. CIS's willfully dishonest messaging and research on sanctuary policies

perhaps best evidences this. In July 2015, CIS published a report declaring that there were 276 so-called sanctuary jurisdictions in the United States, including all 58 counties in California. CIS also produced a map of the jurisdictions to accompany the report. Both CIS's report and map were intentionally misleading. They included jurisdictions without any sanctuary commitments beyond avoiding unconstitutional policies, and it obscured the fact that federal officials wishing to take a detained immigrant into custody need only provide a warrant, anywhere in the country.

CIS has roots in white nationalism; its founder was avowed eugenicist and white nationalist John Tanton. Although CIS works to create a veneer of legitimacy, it embodies the racism upon which it was founded. The group created the doctrine of "self-deportation," arguing that laws should be enacted to make life so difficult for migrants that they are forced to return to their countries of origin. Its staff often make racist comments in their professional capacity. Stephen Steinlight, a Senior Policy Analyst at CIS, publicly said that he believed President Obama should be "hung, drawn, and quartered." Steinlight still works for CIS and is a frequent spokesperson for the organization.

Regardless of the facts, anti-immigrant groups used CIS's map as a tool to fabricate nationwide panic about so-called sanctuary jurisdictions, vilifying immigrants in the process. The topic of sanctuary cities became a fixture of the presidential campaign and budget battles in Congress following the anti-immigrant movement's concerted efforts to exploit tragedies to push this issue to the top of the news cycle.

The Remembrance Project

Anti-immigrant activists with The Remembrance Project have similarly targeted sanctuary jurisdictions based on distorted facts and a thinly veiled nativist agenda. Co-founded in 2009 by Texas activist Maria Espinoza, The Remembrance Project cynically takes real, heartbreaking stories from victims of violence and their families and disingenuously uses them to spread fear of immigrants.

Espinoza's nativism is overt. In a 2013 article for The Social Contract Press, Tanton's white nationalist publisher, Espinoza wrote, "Sanctuary cities, unsecured communities, human trafficking, molestations of our children, are all part of the vernacular of this disease that illegal immigration speaks, and must be addressed now!" Espinoza has also attended The Social Contract Press' Writers' Workshop, an annual invitation-only meeting that has been attended by prominent white nationalists over the years such as Peter Brimelow, Sam Francis, and Jared Taylor.

In 2015, The Remembrance Project called for a "national boycott of the city of San Francisco" due to its so-called sanctuary law enforcement policies. While The Remembrance Project is a national organization, it is very active in California, led by state coordinator and longtime anti-immigrant activist Robin Hvidston.

Espinoza, Hvidston, and other Remembrance Project activists have also made their presence known in Sacramento, regularly lobbying and testifying against immigrant rights legislation. In both March and April of this year, activists made the trek from Southern California to the Capitol. Espinoza herself testified against legislation before the California Senate Health Committee in April 2016 and the Senate Governmental Organization Committee in April 2015.

Understanding the unique power tragic stories can hold, the organized anti-immigrant movement has increasingly embraced Espinoza and her organization's work in recent years.

Since Trump's days on the campaign trail, he has also embraced The Remembrance Project and their bigotry, elevating them in the national spotlight. The Remembrance Project's newfound exposure thanks to Trump led the group to hold its first ever national conference and fundraiser in September 2016. Of course, Trump was the conference's keynote speaker. California's Robin Hvidston was also in attendance.

The group's time in the national spotlight has drawn attention to concerns about Espinoza within The Remembrance Project and accusations that she misled donors and members regarding the group's use of funds. Politico's June 2017 exposé on these issues revealed these accusations, along with significant internal criticism of Espinoza's leadership.

Since the election, Espinoza has moved to Washington, D.C. to increase The Remembrance Project's lobbying work and further support the Trump administration. Some of the group's members have criticized the move as being driven by Espinoza's careerism. "The more involved I got, once I got past my son's trial and could focus more on the organization, it just seemed like my values and my goals were different than what Maria's were," one former Remembrance Project activist told Politico. "It started to feel like this might be a steppingstone for her." Espinoza also used The Remembrance Project as the foundation for her failed run for Congress in 2016.

Politico revealed that The Remembrance Project misled donors and members alike by suggesting the money they raised would be used to financially assist those who had lost a family member. Former Remembrance Project member

Brenda Sparks told [Politico](#), “We were used, abused and exploited, and what’s worse is that my son was used, abused and exploited and is still being used, abused, and exploited.”

According to Politico, Trump helped The Remembrance Project sell tickets worth \$52,000 at the group’s September 2016 fundraiser. Yet none of the money was used to help the group’s members with medical or legal costs.



Image source: Screenshot from Fox News.

Through her organization, The Remembrance Project, Maria Espinoza cynically promotes stories of crimes with the goal of vilifying immigrants. She has maintained longstanding connections to the white nationalist publisher The Social Contract Press and other organizations that comprise the anti-immigrant movement. Espinoza has used The Remembrance Project as a platform for her political career, having launched a failed Congressional campaign in 2016 and moved to Washington, D.C. in 2017.

Despite Espinoza’s move to Washington, Hvidston remains in California, continuing to foment a small but visible force for anti-immigrant sentiment in a state viewed by many to be one of the most pro-immigrant in the country.

Federation for American Immigration Reform

The Federation for American Immigration Reform (FAIR) is widely considered an extremist group because of its roots in white nationalism and eugenics and its virulent and false attacks on immigrants. FAIR’s work advances deeply racist immigration enforcement legislation that maligns communities of color—both immigrant and native-born. The group was founded by avowed white nationalist and eugenicist John Tanton. While FAIR is a national group, it is active in California.

In January, FAIR National Field Director Susan Tully organized a meeting with over two dozen of California’s anti-immigrant activists and publicized it in a photo posted to Twitter. Many of the people pictured in the photo are affiliated with the southern California-based anti-immigrant group We the People Rising. This was not a one-time event: Tully attended a similar meeting with many of the same activists in January 2016. FAIR later published a blog about this meeting, claiming the event was a strategy meeting with activists representing six different organizations from across southern California. According to FAIR, those in attendance “discussed strategies to fight the continued onslaught of bad state legislation” with Tully.

Tully has individually promoted the same pernicious xenophobia and fear mongering upon which FAIR was founded. She has admitted FAIR works with the Remembrance Project with the goal of depicting murderers as “poster child[ren] of both the DREAM Act and amnesty.” Tully has also publicly said, “[Muslims] are not coming here to become Americans. ... [They are] promoting colonization of their own religion, of their own culture in towns and taking them over.”

In addition to maintaining strategic relationships with anti-immigrant activists in California, FAIR has attempted to influence state legislation. As part of its anti-sanctuary efforts nationwide, FAIR recently targeted California's SB 54, the California Values Act, which would curtail the use of state and local resources for mass deportations. FAIR has distributed an action alert urging their members to email California state representatives and ask them to oppose the California Values Act, using inaccurate and insulting language to refer to immigrants.

CALIFORNIA'S POCKETS OF LOCAL NATIVISM

Californians for Population Stabilization

California hosts homegrown anti-immigrant groups, largely concentrated in the southern part of the state. They represent very few California residents, but attempt to wield policy influence through their relationships with national nativist groups.

The most nationally relevant anti-immigrant group in the state is Californians for Population Stabilization (CAPS). CAPS presents itself as an environmental organization, yet is marginalized by the environmental movement—for good reason. CAPS disingenuously relies on real environmental issues to promote a deeply anti-immigrant agenda using discredited population control arguments.

CAPS' agenda includes dismantling birthright citizenship, enacting major cuts to legal

immigration, and promoting the deportation of every single undocumented immigrant in the United States. The group has a minimal grassroots base of support, instead primarily working to achieve its goals through television and radio campaigns in California and other states.

CAPS' history is littered with racist extremists. John Vinson, a former CAPS Senior Writing Fellow, helped found the neo-Confederate League of the South. He is also the founder and president of the virulently anti-immigrant American Immigration Control Foundation. Joe Guzzardi, another CAPS Senior Writing Fellow and longtime spokesperson for the organization, previously served as an editor of the white nationalist website VDARE.com and authored dozens of articles for the site. In 2013, CAPS board chair Marilyn DeYoung disparaged the DREAM Act. Her reasoning: "A baby can join a gang and then commit a crime, a baby can drop out of school and become a criminal, a baby grows up."

CAPS also maintained a five-year relationship with neo-Nazi Parker Anthony Wilson, including bringing him on staff in 2016. Wilson has a long history of Neo-Nazi activity, including subscribing to the National Alliance publication National Vanguard and regularly posting on Stormfront, one of the internet's largest and most notorious white supremacist websites. CAPS only severed ties with Wilson after the publication of an exposé by El Tecolote.

CAPS' most recent television advertisements exploit human tragedies to argue against sanctuary city policies that prevent local police from carrying out immigration enforcement. Though CAPS presents itself as an environmental organization, these advertisements are clearly aligned with messaging strategies promoted by anti-immigrant groups Center for Immigration

Studies and The Remembrance Project, and do not mention the environment once.

Another one of CAPS' advertisements blamed immigrants for California's drought, air pollution, and traffic, among other things. CAPS boils these issues down to population, concealing their complex causes in favor of a red herring. One ad features a young boy asking, preposterously, "If Californians are having fewer children, why isn't there enough water?" The ad concludes by asserting that the majority of California's population growth is from immigration and imploring, "Let's slow immigration and save some California for tomorrow."

The ad not only mistakenly places the blame for drought and environmental degradation on immigrants; it ignores the true causes of global environmental crises like corporate polluters and lax environmental regulations. It also conceals the actual causes of California's drought, which have nothing to do with household water consumption.

A more important question is: Now that population alarmism has been confronted by declining birth rates and population control efforts have been broadly rejected due to their overt racism, how is CAPS able to fund its work?

The answer, not surprisingly, has to do with the xenophobia on which CAPS relies. CAPS has received contributions from foundations connected to the eugenics movement and, in particular, to a single wealthy conservative family, the Scaifes. John Tanton was a friend of the late Cordelia Scaife May, whose Colcom Foundation and related family foundations are integral to financially sustaining the organized anti-immigrant movement. CAPS reported just under \$3 million in excess Colcom Foundation contributions in 2015.

Even more troublingly, CAPS has received

funding from the Pioneer Fund, a white supremacist foundation devoted to racial purity through eugenics. In addition to supporting the anti-immigrant movement in the U.S., the Pioneer Fund has provided funds to the white nationalist groups National Policy Institute and American Renaissance.

We the People Rising

As the federal government is responsible for immigration policy and enforcement, the organized anti-immigrant movement's efforts are primarily focused on Capitol Hill. However, the movement has cultivated small but dedicated groups of activists to support nativist policies at the state and local level as well. The Claremont, California-based group We the People Rising is one example—and is among the most active nationally of these groups.

We the People Rising's principal leadership and key figures emerged from the decline of the border vigilante Minutemen movement in the early 2010s. Robin Hvidston, a former Minutemen activist and current Executive Director of We the People Rising, has long been the face of the organization. The group has become known for its activists' brazen, confrontational style.

Hvidston and other We the People Rising activists made nationwide headlines in the summer of 2014 for preventing buses transporting Central American families from entering a Border Patrol facility in Murrieta, California. The Murrieta protests, which were only possible after a Border Patrol agent leaked information about the buses' transportation routes to local activists, garnered significant media attention and were a brazen display of virulent xenophobia. Central American families



Image source: YouTube.

Robin Hvidston is the executive director of far-right, anti-immigrant group We the People Rising and the California co-director of The Remembrance Project. Hvidston was a key figure in the Minutemen movement in the 2000s, serving as the Minuteman Project's national rally coordinator. More recently, she helped organize and promote protests in Murrieta, California in 2014 to stop buses carrying Central American migrants from entering a Border Patrol facility.

who had already made the traumatic journey to the U.S.-Mexico border were accosted by anti-immigrant activists shouting “Go home!” and displaying signs saying “Protect your Kids from Diseases,” “No New Tax\$ / No New Illegals,” “Stop Illegal Immigration,” and “Return to Sender.” Days after the protests, Murrieta City Manager Rick Dudley lamented that the protesters’ actions had “given our community a black eye.”

One sign was particularly prominent in photos of the Murrieta protests, beyond the omnipresent U.S. and Gadsden flags: We the People Rising’s signature red and yellow signs reading “STOP ILLEGAL IMMIGRATION.” It was neither the first nor the last time such signs were featured in news from Southern California.

Today, We the People Rising activists, large signs in tow, hold public demonstrations virtually every week in Southern California. The location for demonstrations change depending on the week’s news, but the anti-immigrant motivation remains constant. They have targeted Congressional town halls, municipal council meetings, courthouses, and even presidential campaign events. Another prominent sign often wielded by We the People Rising’s activists reads “End Sanctuary Cities,” highlighting what is arguably the group’s most pressing policy goal.

The group’s activists have been willing to go to extreme lengths in their advocacy.

One such instance occurred in April 2015 when We the People Rising protested Rep. Steve Knight outside his Congressional office in Simi Valley. Knight had recently voted to avoid a government shutdown. We the People Rising hardliners viewed this vote as a betraying their goals because it preserved funding for President Obama’s temporary deportation relief program, Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals. We the People activists chided Knight for supporting “amnesty” and one member, Mike McGetrick, accosted the Congressman, placing his hand on Knight’s shoulder and saying “you lied to me.”

According to video of the exchange uploaded by We the People, Knight responded sternly. “Mike, if you touch me again I’ll drop your ass,” he said.

“I have dealt with this group on several occasions and every time they try to escalate our conversations to a level that is not constructive,” Knight later said in a statement about the confrontation. “Over this past weekend, I lost my cool and I regret responding the way I did.”

More recently, We the People activist and Beach Cities Republican club president Arthur Schaper’s actions led to the L.A. County Republican Party revoking its charter for the Beach Cities club. “In a statement, the county

GOP cited Schaper's 'inappropriate activities' — disrupting meetings, intimidating elected officials and citizens — as a major reason for pulling the charter," [The LA Times](#) reported. "Complaints about his activities from elected officials and everyday citizens reflect badly on the Republican Party," the party said."

Schaper's recent activity includes a hosting a meeting in May that featured a brief presentation by Joseph Turner, a far-right nationalist working to revitalize his past anti-immigrant activism in the Trump era.

American Children First

The reemergence of anti-immigrant activist and hardline nationalist Joseph Turner is one of the best indicators that the anti-immigrant movement in California, while marginal, is increasingly bold.

In 2004, Turner founded the anti-immigrant group Save Our State. Since its founding, SOS demonstrations and its online presence became a destination for Southern California neo-Nazis, as [reported](#) by the Southern Poverty Law Center. As leader of SOS, Turner was uninterested in turning away the neo-Nazis that flocked to his events, and even defended white separatism online.

"I can make the argument that just because one believes in white separatism that that does not make them a racist," Turner wrote in a 2005 post on SOS's web site. "I can make the argument that someone who proclaims to be a white nationalist isn't necessarily a white supremacist. I don't think that standing up for your 'kind' or 'your race' makes you a bad person."

Turner made his name for leading SOS's confrontational protests in Southern California. He also spearheaded efforts in 2005 to pass the



Image source: YouTube.

Joseph Turner's anti-immigrant activism is a reflection of his overt white nationalism and bigotry. He has advocated for anti-immigrant policies so extreme that they are unconstitutional on their face, such as denying U.S. citizen children access to free education because their parents are immigrants.

"City of San Bernardino Illegal Immigration Relief Act," a ballot initiative that would, among other things, prohibit landlords from renting to undocumented tenants. Turner's San Bernardino effort was ultimately unsuccessful, but was replicated in towns nationwide, most notably in Hazelton, Pennsylvania and Farmers Branch, Texas. Legal challenges to such ordinances have cost municipalities millions of dollars in legal fees.

Likely because of his success mobilizing anti-immigrant activists, FAIR hired Turner as a field organizer in late 2006. He was reportedly fired a year later, as reports of Turner's extreme personal politics and neo-Nazi appeasement continued coming to light. Turner's activism came to a virtual halt shortly thereafter.

However, in March 2017, Turner returned to anti-immigrant activism.

In a message to former SOS supporters, Turner announced he was creating “a new nationalist organization” called American Children First (ACF). “I don’t believe we will ever have a better chance in our lifetime to secure our borders, crackdown on illegal immigration, and protect and preserve our American values and culture,” Turner wrote.

In an interview with Minnesota anti-immigrant activist Ruthie Hendrycks, Turner revealed that Trump’s election was a catalyst for his renewed interest in anti-immigrant activism. “With the election of Donald Trump I was reenergized and I felt this was a narrow opportunity to save our country from the illegal immigration crisis,” he said.

In the same interview, Turner indicated that undocumented immigrants were not the only group to be subjected to his animus. “Stop trying to turn my country into your country,” he said of legal immigrants. “Last time I checked, I wasn’t trying to leave my country to go to your crap hole of a country. Okay? I was here, minding my own business, enjoying life, loving America, loving our freedoms. If you don’t like it, stay where you’re at.”

Turner formalized that sentiment against immigrants—documented and undocumented alike—on April 3 when he proposed a ballot initiative to prohibit undocumented students from attending public schools in the Yucaipa-Calimesa Joint Unified School District. The ballot initiative would also bar the U.S. citizen children of undocumented parents from public schools, unless their families paid a “non-resident” tuition rate.

As Turner notes, the proposal directly challenges the U.S. Supreme Court’s 1982 *Plyler v. Doe* decision, which requires public schools to provide children with an education regardless of their immigration status.

On April 11, the San Bernardino County Registrar of Voters Michael J. Scarpello wrote a letter to Turner informing him that local school districts could not independently enact the extreme measures proposed in Turner’s initiative. “The admission standards and tuition contemplated in the proposed initiative fall within the area of the Legislature’s preemption of this subject,” Scarpello wrote.

In an April 25 email to supporters, Turner relayed the news of the proposed initiative’s failure and noted that he was seeking legal advice from his former employer, FAIR.

“We are exploring legal options with the Federation for American Immigration Reform and some other contacts I have in the Republican Party,” Turner wrote. “I am working on a Plan B strategy to circumvent *Plyler v. Doe* and put our American children first.”

Details of Turner’s “Plan B” to overturn *Plyler* have not yet materialized, but he has continued to increase his public presence, advocating for hardline anti-immigrant policies, in support of the Trump administration, and against sanctuary policies.

On June 2, Turner wrote to supporters announcing “Operation Defund Sanctuary Cities.” The plan, Turner wrote, will use “a little known aspect of Proposition 218 which was passed by California voters in 1996” to force a referendum on certain city taxes, possibly depriving them of particular tax revenue. The City of Cudahy’s was Turner’s first target. “We only need to get 62 signatures to force a vote on repealing the utility user tax in the sanctuary city of Cudahy, CA. And that tax generates 13.5% of that city’s revenue,” Turner wrote.

Turner’s latest plan is a brazen and overzealous attempt to punish localities that try to welcome immigrants. Even if he successfully places a vote on the Cudahy ballot, it seems unlikely

voters would approve—State Sen. Ricardo Lara, one of the California Assembly’s most staunch immigrant advocates, represents the city. Nevertheless, Turner has shown a willingness to do more than simply demonstrate in the streets. He is willing to work through bureaucratic channels, burdening local governments in the name of nativism.

ANTI-IMMIGRANT COLLUSION WITH ELECTED OFFICIALS

Explicitly nativist policies championed by the anti-immigrant movement have little chance of advancing through the California State Assembly or being signed by Gov. Jerry Brown. Nevertheless, some Golden State lawmakers continue to promote anti-immigrant policies.

Assemblyman Travis Allen is one such lawmaker.

On April 18, Allen held a press conference in support of legislation he introduced in February: AB 1252, the Promoting Cooperative Law Enforcement to Detain Criminal Aliens and to Eliminate Sanctuary Jurisdiction Act of 2017. The bill is a direct response to pro-immigrant legislation California lawmakers have advanced to strengthen the state’s sanctuary policies and assure that local law enforcement are not burdened with enforcing federal immigration laws.

To bolster support for AB 1252, Assemblyman Allen invited Agnes Gibboney, Patrice Lynes, Betty Robinson, Raul Rodriguez, and Chanell Temple—all affiliated with We the People Rising and/or The Remembrance Project—to speak at his press event. Following the press conference,

Gibboney and Rodriguez also testified before the Assembly Public Safety Committee’s hearing on AB 1252. Following the hearing, committee members opted to kill the bill, voting 2-5 against it.

California lawmakers are not the only elected officials who have ties to the organized anti-immigrant movement. In March 2017, Sheriff Scott Jones of Sacramento County publicly allied himself with Donald Trump’s abhorrent immigration enforcement policies and anti-immigrant rhetoric: Jones hosted Acting ICE Director Thomas Homan at a public forum. Homan is the Trump administration official responsible for implementing Trump’s punitive policies that target immigrant communities and separate immigrant families.



Image source: YouTube.

Sheriff Scott Jones has become an outspoken ally of the anti-immigrant movement. He not only has ties to some of the most anti-immigrant figures in the Trump Administration, having signed a letter in support of Attorney General Jeff Sessions and hosted Acting ICE Director Thomas Homan at a public event; he also has ties to the nativist group Federation for American Immigration Reform.

Jones' support for extreme anti-immigrant policies is no surprise.

FAIR has worked for years to develop a network of sheriffs capable of implementing the group's extremist, nativist policy goals, and there is evidence that Jones may be part of this network. In 2015, he attended FAIR's annual event "Hold Their Feet to the Fire," intended for the group's most strident allies in Congress, law enforcement, and on the grassroots level. That year, known white nationalist Marcus Epstein was also in attendance, a man who formerly helped lead the white nationalist campus network "Youth for Western Civilization."

Jones is not the only northern California sheriff to put his name behind the virulent nativism driving the Trump administration.

The California State Sheriffs Association sent an official letter pledging support for Jeff Sessions, Trump's attorney general and a man who built his Senate career as an advocate of ruthless anti-immigrant policies. Alameda County Sheriff Gregory Ahern and Kern County Sheriff Donny Youngblood signed the letter on behalf of the Sheriffs Association.

Several California sheriffs also met with Sessions just prior to his confirmation. As a Senator, Sessions closely collaborated with FAIR and the other groups that comprise the anti-immigrant movement, serving as their most public ally on the Hill and championing their agenda. Sessions' relationship with the organized anti-immigrant movement is so close that as a Senator, he hired then-CIS staff member Janice Kephart as temporary counsel while the Senate Judiciary Committee considered immigration reform bill S.744 in 2013.

The California State Sheriffs Association has also strongly advocated against current California legislation intended to protect immigrant rights, such as the California Values Act.

CONCLUSION

As this report details, the anti-immigrant movement is as dedicated as ever in California. Its regular presence, both in Sacramento and local municipalities, indicates a willingness to overtly advocate for nativist ideas against increasingly pro-immigrant public opinion. The anti-immigrant movement advocates for policies that seem out of step with most Californians today. Yet they should not be dismissed or ignored, but exposed.

The groups and individuals detailed in this report boast explicit ties to extremism and represent the same forces responsible for previous stains on California's history like Proposition 187. These groups have tried to present themselves as mainstream, but their individual actions evidence they are anything but. Californians for Population Stabilization hired a neo-Nazi and up until very recently published white nationalists regularly. Activists with We the People Rising and American Children First are rubbing shoulders with emboldened white nationalists affiliated with the so-called alt-right. And while their nationalistic rhetoric is often disingenuously cloaked in support for veterans and the homeless, it is undeniable that anti-immigrant animus is their primary source of motivation.

The dangerous and bigoted agenda of anti-immigrant groups, with their newfound boldness under Trump, should not be shaping California policy. Instead, all residents should stand with California's vibrant immigrant communities against these attacks—whether they occur on the Capitol grounds, in local council meetings, or in the streets.

Center for New Community

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