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Obama should immediately halt deportations



President Obama needs to immediately bring to an end his deportation policy.

Obama has deported almost 2 million undocumented immigrants. He has also doubled down on harsh enforcement measures, such as close collaboration between employers, local officials and Immigration and Customs Enforcement agents.

Undocumented immigrants have been organizing against such policies. Not satisfied with receiving temporary relief under the 2012 Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals program, for example, undocumented immigrant youth, or DREAMers, have demanded relief for their parents, too.

Now they have acquired a significant ally. On March 2, Janet Murguia, president of the National Council of La Raza, a prominent Latino advocacy group, characterized Obama as “the deporter in chief” and demanded that the president take unilateral action to halt deportations. The organization had previously echoed Obama’s principles on immigration reform, such as militarization of the U.S.-Mexico border, employer sanctions, and other stringent measures like

finances and back taxes on aspiring citizens. In speaking out against Obama's deportations, Murguía finally expressed the frustrations and demands of undocumented immigrants and their advocates.

This potentially represents trouble not only for Obama but also for Democrats in general. Obama wasted no time in defending himself as the "champion in chief" of immigration reform. Latinos know "I've got their back," he asserted. But with his record on immigration not much different from Republicans, Latinos are torn about their electoral loyalties.

In a period of dramatic demographic change in this country, it's time for Latinos to flex their political and economic clout by invoking their basic human rights and asking to be treated with dignity and respect. Instead of accepting immigration reform plans from Democrats and Republicans that exclude many or all of 11 undocumented immigrants from a pathway towards citizenship, this large and heterogeneous group should demand what immigrants deserve and earn on a daily basis: amnesty.

Obama can still redeem himself with Latinos. He should exercise his executive privileges by halting deportations and providing immediate relief to the millions of undocumented immigrants living in the shadows. Nothing less will suffice.

Alvaro Huerta, a UCLA visiting scholar at the Chicano Studies Research Center, is the author of "Reframing the Latino Immigration Debate: Toward a Humanistic Paradigm" (San Diego State University Press, 2013). He can be reached at pmproj@progressive.org.

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