



WHY WE MARCH

April 10, 2006

***Queers for Economic Justice* calls upon all of our allies to march today in support of immigrant rights.**

We stand in solidarity with immigrant communities for many reasons. First of all, because the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) community and the immigrant community are not mutually exclusive. There are thousands of LGBT immigrants in this country. We recognize the historically interconnected nature of the immigrant and LGBT struggles — such as the ban on “homosexual immigrants” that extended into the 1990’s, and the present HIV ban, which disproportionately impacts LGBT people — and we believe that only by understanding these connections and building coalition can we ensure real social change for all. We also know that LGBT people and immigrant people have historically been portrayed in this country as scary and as “other”, and we have been used in this country as scapegoats for many issues.

We know that this country has a long history of denying citizenship and legal protection to many groups of people. Immigrants and LGBT people are just two of those many communities, and we must stand together. Citizenship for all people of African ancestry born in this country was not settled without a civil war that took millions of lives. And even then, it took another hundred years to eliminate overt and official limitations on the citizenship of the descendants of African slaves, and we are still fighting the battle for true citizenship. There is no God-given birthright to citizenship. US citizenship is, indeed, a bundle of rights and privileges that have been bestowed on select groups of people by the powers that have been in this country, or that have been wrested from these same powers. And those in power in this country have consistently treated the rest of the people of this planet as resources or obstacles to resources that belong to them. For so many people, migration, within this country and to this country, is as much a reflection of patterns of capitalist "investment," (more appropriately entitled imperialism and exploitation), as it is of any "choice" of workers. Withholding of the bundles of rights and privileges of citizenship is just one more aspect of that exploitation. To not challenge current immigration law is to endorse nothing less than the brutal expropriation of people's labor, lives, cultures, and homes.

We understand that anyone who identifies as lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender cannot in good conscience support current immigration law, an area where overt discrimination is still considered the

privilege of Congress and the Executive. We know, as people whose sexual activity was regarded as a crime in about half the states in this country until a Supreme Court decision three years ago, that we must challenge those laws that are unfair.

We also reject any attempts, made by some in our community, to pit the struggle of multiple communities against each other and firmly believe that "Rights" are not in limited supply. We condemn the "scarcity of rights" perspective espoused by some members of the LGBT movement. But then, one reason why it has always been so hard to shift power in this country is because the ruling class has successfully made us believe that there are only a few deserving groups to whom rights can be given. This strategy has always been used to divide oppressed groups from coming together to work in coalition.

We are painfully aware that lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender communities still lack many basic protections under the law in this country, including the right to care for and support all of our families, in the various ways in which we construct family and kinship. Nevertheless, supporting immigrant rights, while we continue to work for LGBT liberation, does nothing to hurt our cause. In fact, we believe the opposite to be true, and want to work towards building powerful coalitions between immigrant and LGBT movements to work together for social justice.

We are also aware that many immigrant right advocates have (intentionally or not) used anti-black rhetoric to move their agenda forward. Arguments such as "*Don't treat us like 'criminals'*" or "*We are doing work that 'other' Americans won't do*" have the effect of positioning immigrant narratives as subtly juxtaposed with American stereotypes of non-immigrant black communities. They leave native-born black Americans as among the only people who do not have access to the immigrant narrative, and so are in a permanent position of subordination, and the state consistently negotiates and redefines citizenship and "American-ness" for almost everyone except non-immigrant blacks.

Nevertheless, the solution to this problem is not to abandon support for the struggle of immigrant communities. Rather, we call on immigrant movements and (non-immigrant) black organizations to work together for real racial and economic justice in this country. Together these movements can work to end the exploitation and targeting of both communities, and to ensure that black folks and immigrants do not end up having to choose between competing for low-paying jobs or being targeted for detainment or imprisonment.

We support the current immigrant rights marches and rallies happening across the country this month, and we march too.

- We march to support groups like *Audre Lorde Project* and *the Queer Immigrant Rights Project*, whose work with (and led by) LGBT immigrants serves as model for us all, and whose demands on immigration issues we support.
- We march because immigrants are among the most politically vulnerable, underpaid and exploited communities in the country, and are asking for basic human rights, including the right to live free from torture and exploitation, and the right to work.
- We march because we recognize the connections between the state attacks on immigrant and LGBT communities and that LGBT immigrants in particular are disproportionately affected by much anti-immigrant legislation.
- We march because we oppose the heightened policing and criminalization of immigrant communities, including the increased militarization of the border, as mandated by HR 4437 and Senate bills.
- We march because we oppose indefinite and mandatory detention of noncitizens—as well as the mass incarceration of POC communities in the U.S. more broadly—and envision a society that

ensures the safety and self-determination of all people, regardless of national origin, race, gender or sexuality.

- We march because we oppose the guestworker proposals, which would continue the exploitation of many low-wage workers.
- We march because we demand the repeal of the HIV ban.
- We march because our sexualities have been historically criminalized by this country, and we understand that “law” and “justice” are not the same thing.

Queers for Economic Justice hopes that on Monday, April 10, and on Monday, May 1st you will march with us.