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CLINIC Board Chairman Bishop Nicholas DiMarzio Responds to New Orleans Immigration Raid

On Friday, March 24, The Times-Picayune published a letter from Bishop Nicholas DiMarzio, CLINIC's Board of Directors Chairman, urging a more coherent and humane immigration policy from the federal government. Bishop DiMarzio stated that the March 17, 2006 immigration raid in New Orleans in which 40 immigrants were jailed, raises serious questions about the treatment of immigrants in the aftermath of Hurricanes Katrina and Rita.

Bishop DiMarzio noted that after the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks, INS Commissioner Michael Ziglar repeatedly and publicly reassured undocumented immigrants that they should come forward to government authorities if they believed a relative or loved one had died in the terrorist attacks. Commissioner Ziglar also ordered that no immigrants be arrested or prosecuted for immigration violations when coming forward to obtain information about relatives or friends lost in the attacks.

Bishop DiMarzio urged that the federal government adopt a similar policy in times of natural disasters or other emergencies, so that immigrants are not put in jeopardy due to a fear of federal authorities. He stated that a clear, consistent and humane approach that did not discriminate among disaster victims based on immigration status would benefit our communities and disaster relief efforts. To view the article, go to: www.nola.com.

Update on New Orleans USCIS Office

The following update on New Orleans District Office was provided to Community-Based Organizations at a meeting at USCIS HQ on March 28, 2006. As per New Orleans District Director Stella Jarina:

"We expect to fully reopen for all services at our permanent location ("Metairie Centre") on May 23, with a Grand opening/open house for invited persons (which will include CBOs) on May 22. In the meantime, we have obtained some temporary space at Clear view Mall Suite 35 (opposite the Food Court), 4436 Veterans Memorial Blvd, Metairie, LA 70006 ("the Mall"). At this location we will begin offering all ASC services, including I-90 processing and biometrics processing on April 3. Appointments for this location should start going out as of March 21. There is no moratorium on

particular zip codes for the ASC appointments. Individuals can still use the Jackson, MS ASC if they prefer. Interviews for Naturalization, Adjustment of Status, and for Removal of Conditions on Residence (I-751s) will also be conducted at the Mall, and notices have started going out for this location. Once again, they will go out at least 30 days in advance of the interview date. We will not be able to provide general information services at the Mall. Individuals who need general information either need to call the 1- 800 number or make an InfoPass appointment to visit our Jackson, MS, office. Once we open at Metairie Centre, we will be offering the full range of services. However, we will be establishing an appointment only process for the Information Counter. Persons who appear at our office without an appointment will be assisted in making an appointment (via InfoPass), which may or may not be the same day.”

ICE Worker Raid Ruses to End

In a recent letter from ICE Director Marcy Forman to the United Food & Commercial Workers Union (UFCW), the ICE Director stated that ICE would immediately cease the use of ruses involving health and safety programs for the purpose of immigration enforcement.

Apparently, ICE's use of a sham meeting dealing with issues under the purview of Occupational Safety and Hazards (OSHA) to draw in undocumented workers for the purpose of immigration enforcement drew widespread protest. You may read the letter at: <http://www.ilw.com/immigdaily/news/2006,0331-sting.pdf>

New Orleans Workers Sue

The Immigrant Justice Project of the Southern Poverty Law Center filed two separate lawsuits in February on behalf of immigrant workers. In one complaint, plaintiffs complain that LVI Environmental Services of New Orleans, Inc., and D&L Environmental, Inc. of Florida grossly underpaid 700 workers. In the second complaint, plaintiffs charge Belfor USA Group, Inc. and its subcontractors with not paying overtime to more than 1,000 workers.

FEMA to Extend Apartment Payments

FEMA announced on March 27th, that it will extend payments under the Section 403 apartment program until May 31, 2006, despite letters sent to 60,000 evacuee families in early March that FEMA would end the program on March 31st. There was no explanation for why the announcement was delayed until within days of April's rents being due. However, the details of the extension are explained in a 3 page letter that FEMA sent to the state and city governments who are administering the program, and in a 7 page “Disaster Specific Guidance” memo.

The FEMA letter and memo are posted to www.FEMAanswers.org under “Recent Updates.” Unfortunately, FEMA has not announced this yet on their web site or anywhere else. The FEMAanswers.org web site is the only place where the memo and letter are currently available.

[posted: www.justiceforneworleans.org, March 28, 2006]

Help for New Orleans' Small Businesses

A newly formed grassroots, nonprofit organization called Second Wind will assist New Orleans small businesses to rebuild after Hurricane Katrina. Pro bono lawyers from Strook & Strook & Lavan and Citigroup and the Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights, in consultation with NOLAC, the Pro Bono Project, Tulane Law School, Loyola Law School and others are collaborating on the project.

Second Wind will work to secure financial assistance for small businesses and to ensure that small businesses are a significant part of New Orleans' rebuilding process. Second Wind will also provide assistance with insurance settlement negotiation, debt reduction, bridge loans, commercial lease issues, tax incentives, and infrastructure repair.

For information on Second Wind's meeting schedule and how to apply for membership, contact: violetsnola@aol.com
.[source: katrinalegalaid.org; Feb. 27, 2006]

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