

OPINION

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Arizona Law Fundamentally Un-American

Immigration law is unjust

BY MARC H. MORIAL

Earlier this month, tens of thousands of Americans rallied in cities and towns across the nation in opposition to Arizona's ill-considered new immigration law.



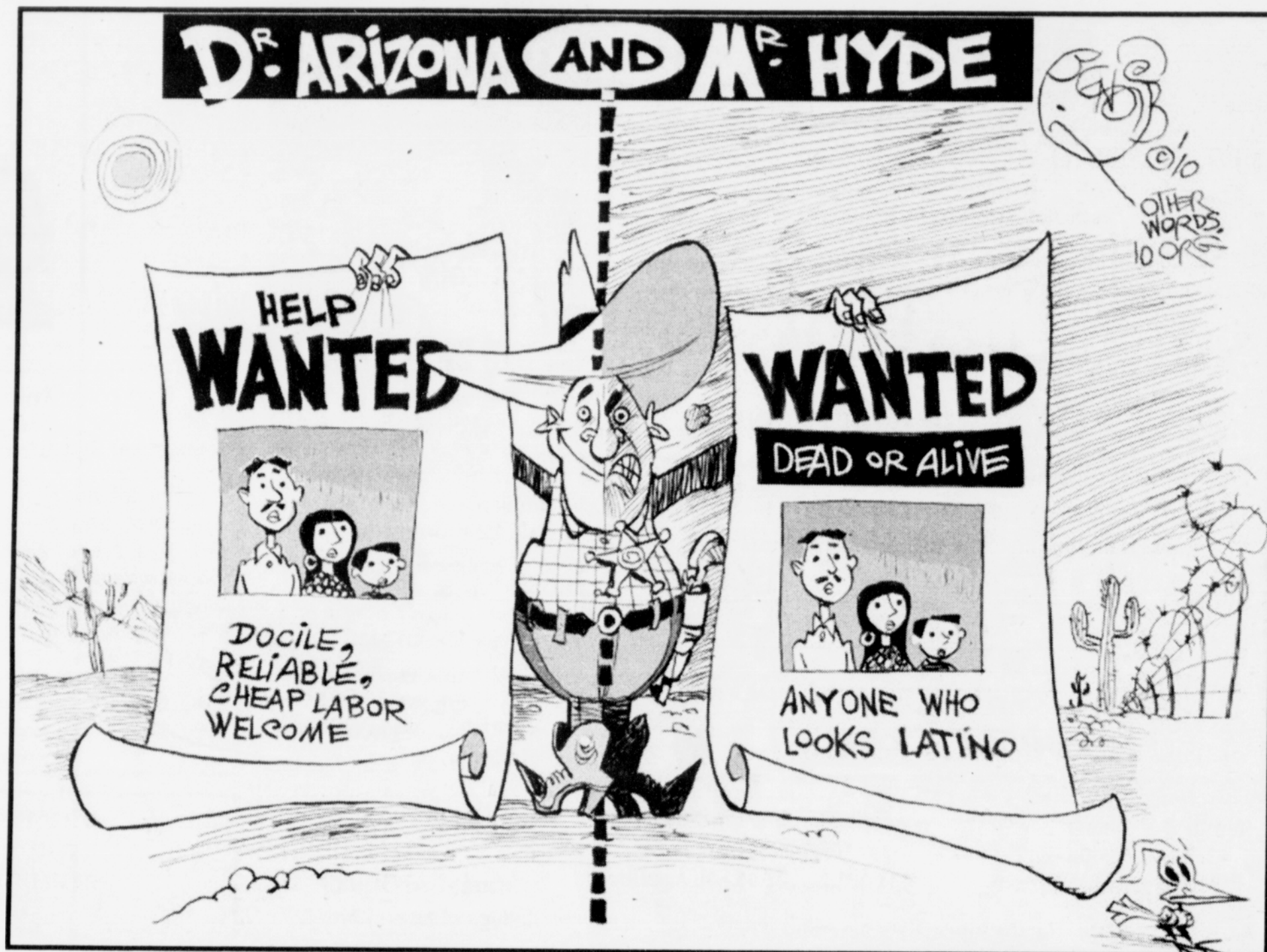
SB-1070, signed into law by Gov. Jan Brewer on April 23, gives the Arizona police unprecedented authority to question and detain anyone suspected of being in the country illegally. Furthermore, the new law, reminiscent of South Africa's apartheid-era pass card laws, makes the failure to carry legal immigration papers a crime.

In our view, the Arizona law is fundamentally un-American and represents an enormous setback in the cause of equal justice. It is a disaster in the making for people of color. It opens the door to racial profiling. And it leaves tens of thousands of innocent, legal residents vulnerable to harassment, detention and imprisonment based on nothing more than the color of their skin or the sound of their voice. The bill should be repealed or overturned at the first opportunity. In the meantime, the National Urban League has immediately suspended consideration of Phoenix, Ariz. to host our 2012 annual conference.

We will not consider holding our conference anywhere in the state as long as this unfortunate law remains in effect. In addition, we are working closely with the Urban League of Greater Phoenix and the Tucson Urban League to respond to the law and protect Arizona's communities of color from unjust persecution.

There is no indication this law will have any effect on the problem it was designed to fix. In fact, many people, including some law enforcement officials, believe it will make matters worse by taking attention away from fighting real crime to focus on the immigration status of law-abiding citizens.

Most people who are in this country legally, including natural-born citizens, don't



Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere.

— Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. 1963, Letter from a Birmingham Jail

carry papers to prove their legal status. I doubt that all the members of the Arizona legislature could prove their residency status if they were stopped on the street at any given moment. Would they be detained, possibly jailed, while their status is determined? Most likely it would depend on the color of their skin.

President Obama has called the Arizona law

"irresponsible" and said it threatens "to undermine the basic notion of fairness that we cherish as Americans, as well as the trust between police and our communities that is so crucial to keeping us safe." We agree. And the Arizona law is a wake-up call for the federal government to finally enact comprehensive immigration reform that honors our highest values and protects innocent children and

families. In the absence of federal action, a growing number of states are enacting or proposing similar patch-work bills that could impede the civil rights of legal residents.

Let's not forget that America is now and has always been a nation of immigrants. Our diversity has been our great strength. That is even truer today, as the challenges and opportunities of globalization bind us ever closer and make us more interdependent. As Dr. King reminded us, "We are caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied in a single garment of destiny. Whatever affects one directly, affects all indirectly."

Marc H. Morial is president and chief executive officer of the National Urban League.

Letter to the Editor

For decades, federal, state, and local governments have spent millions of dollars to stop the practice of racial profiling in our country. In the '90s, the Clinton Administration established an office under the U.S. Department of Justice to change police culture and practice in order to engage and work more closely with the community to solve problems.

Arizona's immigration law turns public safety, civil and human rights back more than 20 years.

Consistent with my candidacy platform on equity and civil rights and as a resident of Portland and Multnomah County, I call for Multnomah County and all other govern-

ments in Oregon to repudiate the Arizona law as contrary to the protections offered in the constitution. The law is morally reprehensible because it violates the human rights of all people. It sets the stage for wholesale racial profiling based solely on skin-color.

I understand that Portland has contracts in Arizona that impact our local economy and we must honor them. Most Arizona cities feel they are also victims of this law. However, I believe that strong statements condemning the Arizona law should be made.

Aside from the obvious civil rights impacts, this law is logistically unrealistic. Consistent with my platform on collaborative governance, policy development re-

Repudiate Arizona Law

quires that elected officials consider financial, social, political, and civil rights impacts on the community.

Thinking systemically and through the lens of collaboration, I wonder if the Arizona governor asked local law enforcement how the law would affect their workload? Did she consider how disrupted families would impact her state's foster care and court systems; how they would prepare for the large number of children whose parents end up in jail; or for the glut of cases and lawsuits in the already-overwhelmed courts that surely will follow?

Did she work with local jails to see if they had the capacity to handle the thousands of people who will be arrested in a few weeks?

Did she consider the economic impact on the economy if employers cannot quickly fill the vacancies created by this law? Judging by the number of Arizona cities filing suit against her office, and sheriffs not supporting the law, I think not.

Fear, scapegoating and violence are often knee-jerk reactions when people feel threatened in a bad economy. Elected officials must take the lead in looking at issues through the lens of civil rights and collaboration. This law does more than negatively impact all people with brown skin; it begins the unraveling of everyone's civil rights.

Maria Rubio, candidate for Multnomah County Commissioner