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National Institute for Latino Policy (NiLP)

25 West 18th Street
New York, NY 10011
800-590-2516
info@latinopolicy.org
www.latinopolicy.org

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Toward a New Immigration Reform Strategy: *Where Do Latinos Go From Here?*

By Angelo Falcón (September 10, 2014)

Latino immigration reform advocates are up in arms over yet another broken promise by President Obama to further delay his plans to issue administration relief on deportations, DACA-style. With the midterm elections ever on his mind, he is now also finally planning military action against the ISIS threat. By side-stepping the immigration issue for the time being he seems to be counting on John Mueller's classic "rally 'round the flag" strategy to bring his party the electoral support it seeks in November to continue their control of the Senate. In the process, he has effectively thrown Latino immigration advocates, who have vouched for him over and over again despite his record, under the proverbial *autobus* or *guagua*.



The reaction so far has been symbolic. Latino leaders are "livid," "bitterly disappointed," with some referring to Obama and the Democrats now as "immigration opportunists." Others have documented how Obama has missed an opportunity to energize his Latino base, giving even more credibility to [Nate Silver's predictions](#) of Democratic Party losses in November. Still others are now increasingly noting that too many of the national Latino organizations had gotten way too close to the White House, with very little payoff. The National Hispanic Leadership Agenda (NHLA), a coalition of 39 of the leading national Latino organizations, just issued a statement that in part pointed out that President Obama has never even deemed to meet with the group in his six years in office!

This collective outburst, however, is being met with sage advice by pro-Obama white liberal allies. Angela Marie Kelley, Vice President for Immigration Policy at the Center for American Progress told [Buzzfeed](#):

"There's no one answer because none of these Latino groups are going to act the same. I do think things will cool down enough so people can look at broader political issues again. . . I don't know that there won't be some constituencies that will be angry and won't get beyond that. But I think most groups will come back to the table. You know, it's not powerful to not vote."

Simon Rosenberg, President of the NDN/New Policy Institute explained to the [Huffington Post](#) that, "Immigration advocates should be careful to temper their reaction. At the end of the day, we are talking about a six-week delay on an issue of enormous consequence. It is more important that it get done right than fast."

The problems with this advice are many. While Rosenberg is pointing out that all that will be involved is "a six-week delay" I think most Latinos might reply. "Oye Simon, it's been SIX YEARS of broken promises." And to Angela, "Are you saying Latinos are so 'hot blooded' that we can't 'look at broader political issues again'?" Which poses the following recurring Cecilia Muñoz Question: Are these people allies or simply flack-catchers for the Obama Administration?

But the big question is what does the Latino community do now? Do we hold out the hope that the President's just announced delay on deportation relief is simply a political blip that will be addressed after the November elections? Or maybe the Latino community will just have to wait until after the 2016 Presidential elections and two or three years of military actions against ISIS? After all, what's two or more years of waiting? Anyway, by this time, it's clear Latinos are already used to the deaths and abuses of the deportations, the continuing employer exploitation of immigrant workers, the unrelenting Republican and rightwing scapegoating for the sins of corporate America and corrupt Central American societies, and have apparently perfected the art of skulking in the shadows of American society. Even Future Stephen in [a recent *The Colbert Report*](#) couldn't pinpoint just when this reform would be adopted! I guess we just have to learn to perpetually delay the need for "immediate" policy gratification.

The problem, of course, is that Latino voters don't have any political place else to go and so the Democrats can continue to take them for granted. The Republicans aren't a real alternative in their current Tea Party-Fox News incarnation. Should Latinos start their own party? Or maybe, we should mass self-deport back to Latin America, Marcus Garvey-like? Another possibility is to have Latinos all join The Libre Initiative or the Heritage Foundation and turn them into hotbeds of Latino activism, since it is rumored we are all "natural Republicans"? Maybe Dolores Huerta should sign on to a class action suit against President Obama for trademark infringement or something over his deceptive use of the phrase, "¡Si se Puede!"

As I look at the comprehensive immigration reform bill that is the object of all this attention, I wonder if it's failure to pass is not a blessing in disguise. It, after all, is a highly punitive measure against Latinos even in its well-received bipartisan Senate version, not to mention the increasingly punitive deformations it has undergone in ensuing versions. After years of talk of the importance of comprehensive immigration reform by both Democrats and Republicans, it is now piecemeal executive action reforms providing deportation relief that is increasingly attractive and will probably become the centerpiece of a new Latino immigration agenda.

As you may have guessed at this point, I have no idea about what the Latino community needs to do next. Except, that is, that we need, as a community, to begin a serious discussion about some new goals and strategies for getting there. How could our national Latino leadership have allowed itself to be put in this position? Why aren't Latinos holding the Democratic Party as an institution more accountable to our agenda, given our loyalty? Maybe we should be telling Latinos to boycott the November elections, like activists did in 2006 when they organized "a day without immigrants" in different cities?

Where do we go from here? A good starting point would be to begin a national conversation at all levels about it, and we offer The NiLP Network on Latino Issues as a forum, among others, for this important discussion.

We begin with a hard-hitting guest commentary by Juan Cartagena of LatinoJustice PRLDEF on "The Insatiable Drive Towards Militarization: The Price For Any Legislative Immigration Reform?" as our next post on the subject coming up later this morning on The NiLP Network. . .

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***Angelo Falcón** is President of the National Institute for Latino Policy (NiLP). He can be reached at afalcon@latinopolicy.org.*