

THE HOUSTON CHRONICLE

# It's time to bridge the gap on U.S. immigration policy

**May 29, 2010**

For the first time, Houston leaders representing businesses, professions, unions, ethnic communities, religious communities and public institutions such as education, health care and law enforcement convened as a task force and held informed discussions to identify a positive, fair, humane and pragmatic community vision for immigration reform and create the leadership to help move that vision forward.

American Jewish Committee Houston under the auspices of the AJC National Bridging America Project, which was funded by the Ford Foundation, acted as a convener over several weeks in 2010 for this local endeavor. One of the outcomes of the Houston Task Force was the following Declaration of Principles.

## **Declaration of Principles**

Whereas, voices of thoughtful, moderate leaders who represent affected businesses, professions, unions, religious communities and public institutions such as education, health care and law enforcement are often not heard in this debate because rational discussions are frequently drowned out by harsh and misinformed anti-immigrant rhetoric; and

Whereas, throughout American history, immigrants have made invaluable contributions to American life; and

Whereas, reforming our immigration system is in the best interests of all Texans; and

Whereas failing to meet the challenges of immigration reform would compromise our economic, social and moral futures;

We therefore declare that any reform of our immigration system should:

- Enhance the security of America's borders with a common-sense and cost-effective approach that protects border residents and identifies and removes those involved with narcotics, arms and human trafficking.
- Uphold family unity as a priority of all immigration policies, including establishing reasonable visa numbers;

- Create a process for undocumented immigrants to earn their legal status;
- Protect all workers, provide efficient channels of entry for both temporary and permanent workers, and create a tamper-proof identification system;
- Require immigrant education in English and American civics in order to facilitate assimilation into American society; and
- Ensure that all people are treated with dignity and respect regardless of nationality or status while making certain that detention and other law enforcement procedures are as humane and noncoercive as possible and include reasonable and appropriate due process.

*Signatories to the declaration are Nancy C. Allen; Kenneth E. (Ken) Arnold; AJC Houston; Rev. Jim Bankston, St. Paul's United Methodist Church; Rabbi Annie Belford; Angela Blanchard, Neighborhood Centers Inc.; Max Blankfeld; Boat People SOS; Bob Borochoff; Beto Cardenas, executive counsel, Americans for Immigration Reform; Chin-Liang Chen, president, Taiwan Innkeeper Associations of Greater Houston; Mike Cole, general presbyter of the Presbytery of New Covenant; State Rep. Garnet F. Coleman; Dick DeGuerin, DeGuerin and Dickson, Lawyers; Beverly Fanarof; Gerald Fanarof; Frances Tarlton Farenthold; **Karen Katz Feldman, FosterQuan, LLP**; Fort Bend Chinese American Association; **Charles Foster, chairman, Americans for Immigration Reform**; Fena Garza; Joyce K. Gilbert; Rabbi Dan Gordon; Ellen Grabois; Peggy Hahn, assistant to the bishop, TX-LA Gulf Coast Synod, Evangelical Lutheran Church in America; Leonard S. Hoffman, M.D., Kaye Horn, retired Texas real estate and mortgage broker; Mary Gwen Hulsey; Hamid Kantara, American Lebanese National Mission (ALNM); Bill King; Stephen Klineberg; Jack Lascar; Robert E. Lapin; Nat Levy, McNeil, Levy & Friedman, L.P.; Syma Cukierman Levy; Dawn Lin, fee attorney, Fidelity National Title Insurance — Chinatown; Tiger Lin, President of Taiwanese Chamber of Commerce; Lung Kong Tin Yee Association; Stan Marek, Executive Committee, Americans for Immigration Reform; Julia Mazow; The Rev. Patrick J. Miller, St. Mark's Episcopal Church; Rabbi Steve Morgen; Steve Murdock; Carol Nelkin; Eric S. Powitzky, M.D.; **Gordon Quan, Houston Coalition for Immigration Reform**; Michael Rinehart, bishop of the TX-LA Gulf Coast Synod, Evangelical Lutheran Church in America; Roland Rodriguez, chairman, MFR; David Roschke, senior pastor, Salem Evangelical Lutheran Church; Marci Rosenberg; Benjamin Samuels; Vicki Samuels Levy, president, Jewish Herald-Voice; Richard Schechter; Cathryn Rodd Selman; Doug Selman; Dinesh Shah, IAPAC; Richard Shaw, secretary-treasurer, Harris County AFL-CIO Council; Dick Steele, the Religious Society of Friends; Tracy Stein; Daniel Stoecker; Amy Dunn Taylor, Kane Russell Coleman and Logan PC; Robert M. Taylor Jr., president, Chelsea Architects; Diana Velardo, executive director, Artemis Justice Center; and Peter Williamson, former national president, American Immigration Lawyers Association*