



The document, "In the Light of Love," is sent to you for consideration as an op-ed and has been signed jointly by:

Most Rev. Wilton D. Gregory, Catholic Archbishop of Atlanta,  
*Plemon Tauheed El-Amin, Imam, the Atlanta Masjid of Al-Islam*  
*Rabbi Scott Saulson of Atlanta*  
*The Rt. Rev. J. Neil Alexander, Episcopal Bishop of Atlanta*

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## **"In the Light of Love"**

A joint statement signed by:

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As people of faith with a strong belief in individual human dignity - regardless of race, language or place of birth - we are concerned about the callous and hateful perspective of many of the loudest voices heard lately around immigration issues.

Our concern includes constant reference to men, women and children in derogatory terms that seem to dismiss their, and our own, humanity and to justify any proposed mistreatment or punishment.

Defaming, diminishing and dismissing newcomers as less than human strikes us as neither very faith-filled nor very American. Our concern is with family, civic and faith values.

If we are to treat others as we would like to be treated, if we believe that mercy will be measured out to us even as we measure it out to others, it seems important to look at forgiving those who once violated the unworkable immigration laws of our country.

These are people who, lacking a "line to stand in," crossed the border at great peril, or who have stayed here on an expired visa, or who have joined family members while waiting a decade or more for immigration documents to be processed. These are people who are taking risks to work for a better life for themselves and their families in a new land. Legal status in civil law is important, but it is not a final measure of humanity.

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It is not a great leap to consider divine law, about “loving the stranger” (Deut. 10:19), “you shall not wrong or oppress the stranger, for you were once strangers. . .” (Ex. 22:21), and “. . . I was a stranger and you welcomed me. . .” (Matt. 25:35).

We are not suggesting that the United States must not act to secure its borders. Nor do we believe that the failed Senate legislation was without major flaws and inadequacies in such areas as family reunification and temporary workers.

We are remembering that most of our ancestors, under a much simpler immigration policy of generations ago, made the voyage to the United States. Some arrived in iron shackles; others shared the dream of a better future for themselves and their families. Insulting nicknames were coined and phrases such as “yellow horde,” and “Irish need not apply” were common. Racism and bigotry led to actions which still stain our national history. Such wounds take much time and effort to heal.

Our blaming newcomers for long-standing problems of health care, education and employment, our denigrating those who may look and sound different from us, does not make us stronger or safer – it diminishes us.

We accept the labor of the desperate, the suffering of separated families, the taxes and the purchasing power of millions of people. It is wrong to say those same people may not be accorded basic human rights and protections or to deny that they are essential to our economy and our future.

May God forgive us even as we forgive others. Forgiveness has always been a value at the very core of the major faith traditions. It is the mutual path to healing.

Let us open our hearts with the hope of finding solutions that are best for our nation, for our world, for our souls, and for the future of our children who are listening so intently to this lesson.

We are sowing the future with our words and our actions in the vast field of our global neighborhood. We will reap what we sow. May God help us.