

S. 744 also has the requirement that “Comprehensive Southern Border Security Strategy is deployed and operational” before even one person who has achieved RPI status can then apply to become a lawful permanent citizen. As noted earlier, the increase in border militarization feeds into the for-profit prison industry, so increased BP deployment will mean increased incarceration. S.744 also includes the provision that 90% of immigrants who have overstayed their visas be detained in order for anyone to begin the permanent resident process, which could ultimately lead to a “snitch” program to out folks who are considered in violation. All these measures will continue to increase the population of undocumented folks locked up. Does this sound like the great political citizenship compromise you’ve been hearing about?

How can we as a movement expect victories when year after year, the same unchanging organizing tactics (marches co-organized with police, symbolic protests for the love from social media, and pleading to authoritarian white powers) are deployed? Our community has seen the same ineffective results for several years, in particular, within the migrant rights struggle. The current demand for immigration reform will inevitably result in more border militarization, and more migrant deaths. CIR will continue to displace Indigenous peoples coming from the global south and the Indigenous people whose only “violation” is existing in their homelands along the border. We need to recognize that the immigration struggle is also a global Indigenous struggle.

This is a time to stop pleading for human rights and to start demanding justice. We need to identify and attack the root causes of the oppressions (US/Mexico binational trade policies, for one) we face that continue to divide us internally as a movement, and to identify those vendido politicians that breed more (racist) laws and more human imprisonment. We need to say a lot more about the international trade policies that continue to uproot people from their homes.

Comprehensive Immigration Reform is clearly not a people’s solution. Profiting off our demise as a gente and converting Indigenous territories to paramilitary police states is big business for government officials and corporations promoting these reforms. We need to be in the business of asking critical questions to be a stronger, united force in responding to this attack and fight back!

COMPREHENSIVE IMMIGRATION REFORM IS ANTI-IMMIGRANT & ANTI-INDIGENOUS

BY FRANCO HABRE AND MARI GARZA



By Franco Habre and Mari Garza

Comprehensive Immigration Reform is inherently anti-immigrant. It is presented as a “path to citizenship” and as a temporary solution to halting the incarceration/deportation of some migrants, but it is actually an attack in disguise. The reform package known as Senate Bill S.744 is a blatant plot to further immobilize, mold, and reduce the lives of migrants. Comprehensive Immigration Reform, otherwise known as “CIR”, is not about restoring the dignity and human rights of migrants. It is, however, an opportunity to reinforce white supremacy, the rule of law; racist/imperial borders; free trade and exploitable labor from the global south, and will further invisibilize the existence of Indigenous/First Nations peoples living in and around the so-called US/Mexico border, which at the time of its creation, bisected the homelands of four Indigenous tribes.

The title of Senate Bill S.744 is, “The Border Security, Economic Opportunity and Immigration Modernization Act”. The title makes it easy to infer the priority of the bill—border security. The policing/surveillance of the 1,933-mile colonial boundary called the US/Mexico border has grown exponentially in the last decade. Communities along this border have experienced the unrelenting infestation of increasingly abusive Border Patrol agents, aerial drones, in-land weaponized checkpoints during daily routines in their own neighborhoods, and increased freight traffic. In addition, despite the increased border security, people still die in the deserts of the border region, those migrating north from Mexico and Central America to flee economic and/or political injustice. This bill will continue to limit the freedom of movement for Indigenous peoples as the bill contains provisions for increased militarization of their homelands, and will thus continue shifting border crossers through the perilous deserts of Lipan Apache, Kickapoo, Tohono O’odham, and Yaqui homelands.

S.744 amplifies this deadly reality by calling for a “border surge” that will nearly double the number of Border Patrol agents from 21,000 to 40,000. Currently more than half of Border Patrol agents are raza, and with the call to double the number of agents, what does this do for solidarity in our communities other than further divide us? This “border surge” also calls for the completion of 700 miles of fencing on the border, putting the 96 miles of the Berlin Wall to shame. Additional amendments include a \$3.2 billion high-tech border surveillance plan—including unmanned attack drones; infrared ground sensors; long-range thermal imaging cameras;

an electronic employment verification program for all employers; and a visa entry/exit system at all air and seaports, in order to limit immigrants who overstay their visas. This is big business, massive federal contracts for defense firms and surveillance technology firms. Does this sound like the “path to citizenship” reform you’ve been hearing about? S.744 is an attack that is playing out in covert ways with age-old divide and conquer tactics. The bill arbitrarily grants “a pathway to citizenship” with very little promise of actually acquiring citizenship due to a ridiculously long and arduous process of bureaucratic hoops that will be required for folks to jump through. This laborious process will actually force folks to out themselves as undocumented, which will in turn make it easier for the government to incarcerate and deport them rather than actually granting residency. It is a Catch-22 that the drafters of this bill surely had in mind, because when really have politicians ever had our gente’s liberation at heart? How can we push for integration into a system that already considers us disposable? Peep this; S.744 is designed to weed out those who the system views as undesirable migrants (those with trumped-up charges from the police state now labeled “criminals”, and day laborers) and to incorporate migrants they consider more desirable like academic scholars and others considered “highly skilled workers”. This bill is being sold as relief to all undocumented peoples, when in fact it will only help the few who have been deemed worthy by a mostly white legislative body. This creates a division amongst folks vying for citizenship and further divides our community, thus reinforcing white supremacy.

So why are folks endorsing CIR when it does more harm than good? Money. Many would stand to make a large profit from this bill. Besides defense firms and surveillance tech firms, the for-profit private prison industry has been making a killing off deportations of our gente since its establishment in the 1980s, with billion dollar profits reported annually. The private prison industry has been lobbying Congress and the Senate hard by making huge campaign donations to key representatives (who should be targeted in our demands) to continue their cash flow from deportations. It is no wonder that provisions in S. 744 make it extremely difficult for people to qualify for the Registered Provisional Immigrant (RPI) status, which will lead to more gente incarcerated in private prisons as a condition of having surrendered their undocumented status to the government.