

Action of the 2009-2010 American Sociological Association Council
By Unanimous Vote of those Responding
May 26, 2010

Present by Vote: Clara Rodriguez, David Snow, Debra Minkoff, Donald Tomaskovic-Devey, Evelyn Nakano Glenn, Jennifer Lee, John Logan, Marc Schneiberg, Margaret Andersen, Marjorie L. DeVault, Omar M. McRoberts, Patricia Hill Collins, Pierrette Hondagneu-Sotelo, Randall Collins, Robin Stryker Rosanna Hertz, Sandra Smith, Sarah Fenstermaker, Sarah Soule.

ASA Executive Officer Sally T. Hillsman provided the background information by email.

Background

As I am sure you are all aware, there has been significant concern expressed by academics and scholars from many disciplines as well as other members of communities throughout the United States about the implications of Arizona's two new laws. One requires the carrying of identity papers in Arizona to avoid arrest and/or detention as a suspected illegal alien. The second forbids K-12 public and charter schools in Arizona from teaching various aspects of ethnic studies. Among other issues for the ASA and its members, these Arizona laws directly impact ASA members residing in or visiting Arizona for scholarly purposes and sociology as a discipline.

President Glenn and the Executive Office have received numerous emails and calls from members requesting Council to issue statements on these laws. Numerous sections (including Labor and Labor Movements; Asia/Asian American; International Migration; Latina/o Sociology; Marxist Sociology; Race, Class, Gender; and Racial and Ethnic Minorities) have taken votes that make the same request of Council. Other related scholarly associations have made public statements (including the Society for the Study of Social Problems, American Studies Association, Justice Studies Association, National Association for Chicano and Chicana Studies) and others are preparing to do so.

President Glenn has prepared two proposed ASA Council Resolutions for your immediate consideration. As Executive Officer I have reviewed them and believe they are within the parameters for lobbying by 501 (c) 3 non-profit organizations such as ASA allowed under the US tax code.

Each resolution was discussed by Council members via email exchange. The following motions were decided upon as the version put to vote by email. Each was accepted unanimously by those participating. There were no negative votes.

Motion:

Whereas the American Sociological Association (ASA), the national organization for sociologists with nearly 15,000 national and international members employed in scientific, academic, government, business, and professional positions, is mindful of the need to speak out against violations of democratic rights;

Whereas SB 1070, the so-called “show your papers” law, violates U.S. principles of liberty and justice;

Whereas historically totalitarian states, not democracies, have required persons at all times to carry official identification documenting citizenship and allowed unfettered police discretion based on arbitrary or politically motivated “suspicion” of specific categories of members within the populace;

Whereas enforcement of SB 1070 violates the constitutional right to the presumption of innocence by assuming guilt that can only be disproved by an individual having on their person official identification papers;

Whereas SB 1070 contravenes the long-established tradition in the United States of America that state and local governments do not give carte blanche to police to arrest anyone—who in their judgment might be a criminal—without reasonable cause;

Whereas Arizona’s violation of American principles and democratic values subjects ASA members to a significant risk of detention while in the State of Arizona;

Whereas the passage of SB 1070 has inflamed anti-Latino passions and created a poisonous atmosphere that has resulted in death threats to a University of Arizona professor and many others including public officials in Arizona who have voiced their opposition to SB 1070;

Therefore, be it resolved that the Council of the American Sociological Association publicly condemns the Arizona legislature and Governor Brewer for enacting SB 1070 and calls for its repeal.

Be it further resolved that the Association refrain from holding its meetings in or conducting business in Arizona until SB 1070 is repealed or negated.

Passed unanimously

Motion:

Whereas the membership of the American Sociological Association (ASA) represents nearly 15,000 scientific, academic, government, and professional sociologists throughout the United States, including many in the State of Arizona;

Whereas the ASA has a tradition of vigorous support for the principles of academic freedom that help to ensure that those with specific knowledge and expertise can guide curriculum

development at all levels of education;

Whereas ethnic studies K-12 curricula draw upon research and scholarship from established fields of the social sciences and humanities such as sociology, history, economics, literature and philosophy, as well as from the knowledge developed in interdisciplinary ethnic studies departments in the nation's foremost universities and colleges;

Whereas the aim of teaching and learning in ethnic studies is to expose students to the rich array of experiences and the complex interrelations among individuals and groups that has a long history of scholarship that includes the development of individual, ethnic and national identities so that students have a deeper, more accurate, and more comprehensive understanding of American society and its history and culture;

Whereas ethnic studies is an enriching aspect of the American educational experience of most public and private school students throughout the United States and is an area of scholarship and doctoral preparation at our leading universities;

Whereas HB 2281 makes possible, and potentially encourages, the persecution of teachers and school administrators in Arizona solely on the basis of presenting material in their classrooms that comes from a recognized body of scholarship that has produced an extensive and useful body of knowledge;

Whereas our Association's members, as well as those of other scholarly societies, have a growing concern that similar legislation could outlaw or significantly limit the teaching of ethnic studies courses and programs at Arizona's outstanding public colleges and universities;

Whereas it will be a great disservice to the youth of Arizona to be deprived of access to this rich body of important knowledge that has contributed to the well-being of the United States, a nation that is envied across the democratic world for its successful diversity;

Therefore be it resolved that the Council of the American Sociological Association issues this public condemnation of the legislature of Arizona and Governor Jan Brewer for enacting HB 2281 and calls for its repeal.

Be it further resolved that the Council of the American Sociological Association calls on the people of Arizona to recognize that the United State is, and has always been, a country composed of people from many different backgrounds whose diverse experiences and cultures have contributed to the nation's dynamism and progress.

Pass unanimously