

March 22, 2013  
State Senator Eric Coleman  
State Representative Gerald Fox, III  
Joint Committee on Judiciary  
Legislative Office Building Room 2500  
Hartford, CT 06106

RE: RB 6659 □ An Act Concerning Civil Immigration Detainers

Dear Senator Coleman, Representative Fox, and Members of the Joint Committee on Judiciary:

My name is Kevin Dean, and I am a student at Yale Divinity School and in the process leading to ordination in the United Church of Christ. I come before you in support of the TRUST Act to harmonize all of Connecticut's law enforcement agencies to honor ICE detainer requests in cases of serious or violent felonies. This legislation is about law enforcement gaining back the trust of the immigrant communities in this state.

I believe in a very radical political principle: that every human being is created equal. Every human being is to be treated with equal dignity. I happen to believe it because of the first chapter of a book called *Genesis*, but it can also be found in the *Declaration of Independence*. It is a principle written on a lot of paper in this country, and slowly, with lots of work and a lot of strife, we hope, becoming one that we take seriously. In fact, it is a principle that is written on so many pieces of paper and repeated in so many speeches and dry moral exhortations that I am not confident that anyone thinks about it any longer.

Now I am in the process to become ordained as a minister in the United Church of Christ; and as a church person, I know something about deeply powerful words that get sanitized and bowdlerized by saying them over and over again. So often our words are like lines next to a checkbox on a piece of paper – all we have to do is pick up our mental pen and put an 'X' in the box. When was the last time any of you carefully considered the words on a document on which you had to sign or mark a checkbox? I am not sure that any of you should answer that question.

In 1776, shortly after the Declaration of Independence was adopted by the Continental Congress, an abolitionist by the name of Thomas Day wrote these lines in reference to the contradiction, already, between the statement that 'all men [sic] are created equal' and the institution of slavery, "If there be an object truly ridiculous in nature, it is an American patriot, signing resolutions of independency with the one hand, and with the other brandishing a whip over his affrighted slaves" (quoted in David Armitage's book *The Declaration of Independence: A Global History*, page 77). He was right, and slavery is not the only instance to which the hypocrisy that Day points out applies.

Today, you are in a position to make a small step toward stopping from contradicting yourselves when you affirm that all human beings are created equal. I know people in this country whose only crimes are to have been born in the "wrong" country, been unable to afford or navigate the outrageous and politicized immigration bureaucracy to enter this country with government authorization, and then to have been, say, accused of a crime they didn't commit, or caught trying to drive to their job. The TRUST Act ensures that people in this unenviable position are not treated with the condescending whip of being told, "Yeah, you're created equal, but it is criminal for you to

try to live a dignified life here. So we're going to send you away from your family and community.”  
No. All people are created equal, and national borders are not part of creation.

So I invite you to do what we often forget to do when we say our good phrases over and over again. First, join me in being silent and reflecting for a moment on what it means that every human being is a reflection of God, or if you prefer, that all human beings are created equal. Now, vote for the TRUST Act, because after what you've just considered, it is not only extremely important, but also only a small step forward in light of that radical principle on which all of us seem to agree.