

Neoteric Speaking Notes

December 7th, 2023

1. When Storms Arise (no speaking before)

According to ICE (Immigration and Customs Enforcement) data from June of 2023, Arizona ranks among the top 5 states with the largest number of people in the immigration detention system admitted per day; That number is roughly 1,600 (Freedom for Immigrants, 2018). An individual put through this system may have to wait weeks or months until their case can be heard before a judge, and those found in violation of our draconian immigration laws may be fined, and/or deported. Detainees are separated from their families, denied basic rights such as access to legal counsel and medical care, and often subject to abuse by guards or other detainees (Landerhold Immigration, A.P.C, 2023)

Every “authorized” ICE facility has passed every inspection since 2012, even those where multiple people have died, some later reported to be due to medical neglect. This pattern continues as seen in one 2015 analysis of ICE’s inspection reports, which revealed that only one out of 100 facilities was given a deficient rating on an annual inspection after 2009. This comes after Congress passing an appropriations law stating the federal government must discontinue contracts with immigration detention facilities that fail two consecutive inspections (Cullen, 2018)

Of those held in detention, nearly 90% are kept in private, for-profit institutions which, due to successful lobbying of the government in the 1980’s by these institutions, stand to gain from the prolonged imprisonment of Black, brown, and Indigenous immigrants. The GEO Group and Corrections Corporation of America (now called CoreCivic) grossed \$551 million and \$552 million respectively from contracts with ICE alone in the fiscal year 2021 (Cullen, 2018).

2. Border

Despite nearly 60 years of landmark court cases (including two supreme court rulings), riots, and most Americans supporting them, four months into this year’s state legislative sessions, more bills targeting LGBTQIA+ rights — particularly transgender rights — have been introduced and become law than at any other time in U.S. history. At least 29 bills targeting these individuals’ rights have become law in 14 states so far this year — All have been signed into law by Republican governors or else enacted by GOP legislatures that overrode Democratic governors’ vetoes. This year’s successful bills are also among at least 408 similar bills introduced in 45 states, compared with 156 in 35 states last year (The Human Rights Campaign, n.d.).

Behind the success of these bills is a network of conservative groups who have coordinated to draft bills and lobby state lawmakers with the express goal of rolling back the rights that LGBTQIA+ Americans have gained in the past decade through rulings such as the 2009 Defense for Marriage Act and 2022 Respect for Marriage Act. GOP legislators in states like Iowa,

Florida, and Virginia (especially) have been actively attempting to dismantle the rights of LGBTQIA+ Americans, particularly the rights of same-sex marriage, access to medical care, and education. (Moohaw, 2023) (Gruber-Miller, 2023).

3. This Marriage (Alison Wahl speaks)

The struggle for universal suffrage has been ongoing in this nation since its founding. The women who have fought for, and continue to strive for, the enfranchisement of women comprise one section of the prism of Americans who have been systematically dismissed and excluded. Before American women had rights to exist and interact in public and economic spheres, generations of women in other cultures enjoyed equality under the law. The American establishment's exclusion and disenfranchisement of people based on any part of their identity continues to affect many people including women, members of the LGBTQIA community, and people of color. The women whose words I have set to music in this piece had a clear and unwavering goal of universal suffrage and total enfranchisement for all Americans. Their aim remains ours today.

4. Sacredness of the Ballot

It is my distinct pleasure to welcome back the Joy in Christ choir to join us in singing Heather Sorenson's arrangement of "Lift Every Voice and Sing". J. Rosamund and James Weldon Johnson's work ultimately reminds us of the power of community. Of the indomitable will of the human spirit, and of the duty, no, the *obligation* we have to one another to ensure we all succeed. When we volunteer in our communities, when we care to help one another, and when we show each other true love, we all benefit. Please rise as you are able and remove your hats as we end our concert with "Lift Every Voice and Sing", thank you.

5. Lift Every Voice and Sing

Sources

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