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Dear Leader,

I am writing to ask you to join me in supporting the Immigrant Workers Freedom Ride – a civil and human rights national mobilization that will take place in late September and early October of 2003. This bus ride, inspired by the Freedom Rides of the Civil Rights Movement will include a series of events will highlight the struggle of new immigrants for rights, dignity and citizenship while also celebrating the accomplishments of the African American Freedom Movement of the 1960's and calling for the continued fulfillment of the dreams of both.

National labor unions and civil rights, immigrant rights and faith organizations initiated the Immigrant Worker Freedom Ride to focus public attention on immigrant rights and the injustices of current immigration policies. Buses filled with immigrant workers and their community allies will leave from nine major cities - Seattle, San Francisco, Los Angeles, Las Vegas, Houston, Miami, Boston, Chicago and Minneapolis. They will spend about a week stopping at key sites of Civil Rights and Immigrant Rights struggles of the past and present. Host committees in many communities will design the events and provide housing and food to the freedom riders. The riders and allies will converge on Washington, DC to meet with members of Congress and then on to a mass rally in New York City on October 4th.

The goal of the IWFR is to demonstrate a broad, national constituency for meaningful reform of immigration laws, while also encouraging civic participation by new and future citizens. In particular, the IWFR will educate the public and elected officials about three key requirements of a new immigration policy:

- A "road to citizenship" for all immigrant workers in this country
- The right for immigrants to re-unite their families
- Protection of the rights of immigrants in the work place.

The buses leaving from Houston and Miami will be a pilgrimage that covers much of the same ground as the Freedom Movement of the 1960's. Like the struggle of African-Americans to attempt to get voice and vote and redress of grievances of attacks on our human rights, immigrants now face similar challenges. Make no mistake. Immigrants of color face barbaric treatment that violates every standard of human decency.

The African-American community continues the struggle to make our region more democratic and economically just. We must acknowledge the increasing diversity of our region and embrace the struggles of our brothers and sisters in the immigrant community. Our enemies are the same and we must stand together to insure that all workers have the right to representation on the job and that all families have access to the rights and benefits of our nation.

You can join me in supporting this effort by:

- Signing and returning the enclosed statement of support for the IWFR
- Joining the local sponsoring coalition in your area
- Making a financial contribution to the success of this effort.

Love embraces justice,

Joseph E. Lowery

JEL/sw

100 Auburn Ave. ~ Suite 102 ~ Atlanta, Georgia 30303

Phone: (404) 653-1199 Fax: (404) 653-0086 Email: GCPAagenda@aol.com

www.gcpagenda.org