

Table of Contents

Introduction	7
Research Context	9
Methodology	12
Results	14
Analytic Themes Within the Results	20
Immigration Policy, Right Wing Nationalism, and the Invention of Race	31
The Racial Construction of the Immigrant Subversive	34
Sexuality, Homophobia, and Immigration Policy	37
Immigration Policy, Political Conservatism, and Contemporary Communities of Color	43
Contemporary Conditions: Racialized Homophobia	48
A Response to the Permanent Partners Immigration Act	57
Immigration Policy, Contemporary Context, 1986 – 2002	60
Immigration to New York Post-1965	65
New Immigration and the Transformation of People Of Color Communities	67
Historical Context of a Decade of Right Wing Activism	68
Capturing the City: the Future Geography of the Right Wing	70
The State Basis of Immigrant Homophobia	72
Recommendations	75

Introduction

This report explores the targeting of New York City's immigrant of color communities by contemporary right wing and politically conservative movements, and investigates the effects of this targeting for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Two Spirit and Transgender (LGBTST) immigrants of color. We understand this historical "targeting" in two senses:

➔ **The persistence of right wing attacks on increased border controls and limiting immigration to the U.S.**

➔ **The continued march towards denying working-class and poor urban immigrant communities of color basic social, political, and economic rights.**

In this report, we follow a different, more recent "targeting" of immigrant of color religious institutions by the same right wing forces, this time as potential allies and as entry points in courting immigrants for conservative and right wing political projects. In the latter case, this "targeting" or courting of immigrant communities of color has been carried out through immigrants of color who are members of traditionally moral and religious communities, who may share an affinity with the U.S. right wing and its criticism of the secularity and 'immorality' of civil society and government, marked for them by the legalization of homosexuality and by proposals that afford equitable legal status on the basis of sexual orientation.

If this project began as an account of the infiltration of right wing movements into communities of color, it has since evolved into a more broad-based inquiry that explores the diverse infrastructure which facilitates the rise of right wing and conservative ideologies in urban, primarily working-class, immigrant communities of color. This infrastructure includes federal immigration policies, welfare reform, U.S. right wing grass-roots movements, and the internal class and gender structure of immigrant communities, and is indicated by the articulation of different forms of homophobia within and beyond immigrant communities of color.

This report begins by examining dimensions of U.S. federal immigration policy that have been authored by or prioritize the interests of right wing movements. We suggest that the conservatively driven immigration policies of the last two decades continue to restrict and regulate immigrant communities of color, and that they marginalize or compound the oppressions of LGBTST immigrants of color in particular. In the following sections we detail "on-the-ground" right wing activity in New York and search to understand the structural elements of immigrant of color homophobias. Throughout this section, we also examine the "progressive" response of faith-based immigrant of color, immigrant rights, and gay and lesbian organizations to the religious and secular right wing in New York City and in the government, exploring those points where the "progressive" response only reinforces and perpetuates certain exclusions even as they contest others. Finally, the report identifies an LGBTST immigrant of color political and social critique that we wish to offer various progressive formations as they craft their own challenges to the ever-growing rightward shift against immigrants of color.

In our current context, the wholesale revision and expansion of immigration policy and immigrant regulation that the U.S. government seeks is signaled by the relocation of the Bureau of Citizenship and Immigration Services (BCIS) [formerly the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS)] into a wing of the Department of Homeland Security (DHS). Immigration as an object of study, let alone as a lived experience for so many of our constituencies in New York

City, is in an impossible state of flux. Within this context, we offer our “findings” and our “conclusions,” some of which remain speculative in nature and others of which appear to the authors as nearly ossified “truths” of U.S. immigration politics.

It remains unclear how the religious and secular right will approach their relationship to immigrants of color in the coming years. While the mid-1990s marked a highly structured and careful attempt by elements of the right to court and make inroads into immigrant communities of color through a conservative moralist agenda (an alarming trend that was, in fact, the impetus of this study), how, and if, they proceed to establish these linkages while also unifying the right around the control of immigration and of immigrants remains to be seen. However, we have also been struck by the continuity in immigration policy in the last two decades, even with all the changes that are now being proposed. The durability of conservative trends in immigration policy for the regulation and political and social exclusion of working class immigrants should expose our present moment as long in the making, and one which began much earlier than the government’s homeland security response.

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We don’t rely too heavily on numbers, except when useful, and we tend to pursue an analysis of the current context rather than merely describe it. With increased access to information and previous research there are many fine reports with sufficient hard data that individuals and organizations can access quite readily, and we hope that the reader will *access* them. We see this report as a supplement to that data and research method. Moreover, because quantitative data only offers precision and a deepening awareness of the conditions it can

identify, access, and measure, we have elected to do a qualitative study to analyze the broader ideological framework out of which the rightward shifts in the social and political life of immigrant communities are introduced, entrenched, and contested. We also chose a qualitative approach in order to be able to pose questions and have dialogue with respondents that elicit the complexity of these issues. Questions regarding the influx of right wing political organizing in immigrant communities of color must necessarily accommodate the intersectionalities of race, class, sexuality, and citizenship. This research method was able to accommodate this requirement through open-ended interviews, combined with a specific method of mapping and identifying immigrant communities and interview respondents. The report was undertaken with the understanding that the arrival of the organized right wing movement in immigrant communities of color figures more as a symptom of a broader ideological strategy that is both less apparent (for quantification) and more complex than empirical study allows. In many ways we have taken the theoretical writings of the women of color movement, now two decades old, that examined the racial, gender, and class conservatism which structured the institutions of government, anti-racist and feminist social movements, and the everyday practices of people of color, as our model for this report. Hence, our goal is that the readers situate this report alongside other quantitative studies and the political theory offered to us by groups like the Combahee River Collective.¹

Finally, we need to make a caveat about coverage: the report’s historical inquiries and written examples tend to represent the histories of the immigrant groups best known to the investigators, as individuals who have worked politically in those communities for a decade and of which they possess detailed knowledge. However, if our examples arise from the communities we both know best, we have been careful to produce an analysis that is founded on surveying the truth of our claims for all the immigrant communities with which we were able to do interviews and collect data. In other words, our examples are not the basis from which we extract our findings and observations, but are meant merely to illustrate sometimes abstract and difficult points and

perspectives that are really cross-cutting issues for various immigrant of color communities with diverse historical experiences.