

African Americans join immigration debate

More weigh in on migrants' impact

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immigrant rally in Marshall Park, said it is a human rights issue.

"This is something that we should all be concerned about," he said. Though the thousands of immigrants who rallied in Charlotte were mostly Hispanic, Allhamisi, who is black, said African Americans should get involved.

"I think that we should all support the children of the earth and we are the children of the earth," he said.

In North Carolina, the immigration issue may seem to be all about Hispanics and Latinos, but it isn't, said Raquel Lynch of the Latin American Coalition. They are just an easy target because of the number of illegals crossing America's southern border.

"The immigration system is virtually broken and in need of repair," she said.

The Rev. Jesse Jackson of the Rainbow PUSH Coalition said the immigration movement is about dignity, but it is being "targeted by divisive and hateful legislation and social policy."

"There is an attempt by some to place the issue in a race frame," Jackson said in a statement. "It must be placed in an economic frame. It is a distortion just to put a Mexican face on the issue. It is a diversion to focus on undocumented families and not on the source of tension: globalization, government and employer-driven policies."

Lynch said that in North Carolina there is a large number of Hispanic immigrants here and it is so new to the state. According to some

estimates, there are as many as 500,000 in this state.

"We have acknowledge that this is an issue that involves people from Africa, from Asia and from all over the world," she said.

But others say undocumented workers have a negative economic impact on blacks. According to the Center for Immigration Studies, the lowering of wages due to illegal immigrants disproportionately affects African American workers.

Mark Krikorian, executive director of the Washington, D.C.-based Center for Immigration Studies, said there has been an 8 percent reduction in blue-collar wages over the last 20 years, the jobs that historically were the key rung on the ladder to middle-class status.

"Office cleaning in Los Angeles, until immigration picked up, was dominated by unionized middle-aged black men," Krikorian said. Now, he said, that industry is no longer unionized, the benefits have disappeared and immigrants dominate.

"It's not as simple as saying that an illegal alien shows up and an American loses a job. But the increase in immigration means that more working aged Americans have stopped looking for jobs."

Throughout U.S. history, African American leaders from Frederick Douglass to Booker T. Washington and W.E.B. DuBois have been critical of immigration and its effect on black workers.

"The black elite has only now decided to (support) immigration," Krikorian said. "John Lewis (a U.S. House member from Georgia) has said that this movement is comparable to the Civil Rights Movement and that's laughable."

Community activist Ahmad Daniels made similar com-

parisons at Monday's rally in Charlotte. And the Leadership Conference on Civil Rights, the nation's oldest civil and human rights coalition, has criticized legislation that would enforce deportation of illegal immigrants.

"The entire history of the civil rights movement has been based on the recognition that there can be no such thing as second-class Americans," said chairperson Dorothy Height. "Yet for too long, our immigration laws have created a two-tiered society and have perpetuated racial and ethnic discrimination."

First black to command 18th Airborne

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

FORT BRAGG — The chief of staff of U.S. Central Command has been nominated to become the commanding general of the 18th Airborne Corps and would become the first black to hold the post, the Army said Monday.

Maj. Gen. Lloyd J. Austin III was nominated by Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld to the rank of lieutenant general and to command the corps and Fort Bragg, where the corps is headquartered.

Lt. Gen. John R. Vines currently holds the command.

The corps includes the 82nd Airborne Division, the 101st Airborne Division, the 10th Mountain Division and the 3rd Infantry Division. The 82nd is based at Bragg and the Army Special Operations Command is a tenant unit.

Austin is based at MacDill Air Force Base in Florida and formerly commanded the 10th Mountain Division and Fort Drum in New York.

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