

Communication and the Rhetoric of Fear: An Analysis of Protest Signs and Slogans Used in the Arizona Immigration Law Debate

by Hilda Escalera
Intercultural Communication

Rationale

The dichotomy between those who oppose the integration of undocumented immigrants within the dominant culture and those who welcome their co-cultural differences is reflected in the socio-politics of contemporary U.S. culture.

Research Questions:

- 1: What ideologies do the slogans and signs used in protest rhetoric pertaining to the Arizona immigration law promote about immigrants in the United States?
- 2: How do the anti-immigration protestors, through their signs and other protest discourse, attempt to define "immigrant"?
2. What ideologies are emphasized through the way these images are portrayed in the media?

Background

- April 23, 2010-Governor Jan Brewer of Arizona signed Senate Bill 1070 into law
- Today nearly two-thirds of Arizona voters (64%) said they favor the state's toughened immigration rules -Rasmussen Reports poll released on April 28 (ASU)

Method: Ideological Critique

Ideology can have an assortment of meanings that refer to beliefs that are built upon central values that have political value (Zevallos 1).

Rhetorical artifacts are examined to determine a particular belief system.

Artifacts for Study

- Six signs and slogans used in protests from conservative websites and blogs
- One artifact illustrated in this presentation

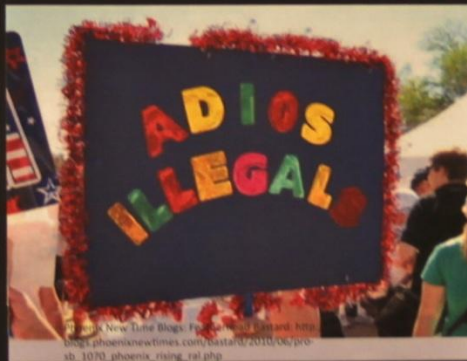


Photo: New Tahr Blog: Freedom Will Stand. <http://blogs.azcentral.com/blogs/2010/06/prosb-1070-phoenix-rising-ral.php>

Analysis

- The statement mocks the "other" by using the "other's" native language, Spanish, in "Adios."
- The idea of racism is raised, as the actual immigration law does not define "illegal immigrants" as Latinos who speak Spanish.
- Illegal and legal immigrants are lumped together as illegals

Analysis Continued

- The sign demonstrates that the dominant culture does not take the co-culture seriously, by simply telling "them" (the "illegals"), which is used as a negative term, "goodbye, adios."
- Ironically, colors associated with Latino culture are used to make a point of sarcastically bidding farewell to this co-culture.

Ideology in the Artifact

By lumping illegal and legal immigrants together and bidding all "adios," those supporting the immigration bill demonstrate their adversity to cultural diversity.

These members of the dominant culture maintain a hegemonic or conservative ideology that suggests all "illegals" must be sent home, that is, out of the United States.


Conclusions and Implications

The protest artifacts communicate:

- Fear of the Other
- Hegemonic ideology
- Popular rhetoric about immigration often operates by representing the immigrant as a social "problem" U.S. citizens should fear
- Fear seems to manifest itself in anger and frustration, as the dominant "us" begin to fear change created by the changing face of the U.S.
- A greater understanding of the ideology these protest signs and slogans communicate may help to bring the discussion of multiculturalism to a more diplomatic and reflective level.

Bibliography

- Zevallos, J. (2010). Ideology and Rhetoric: A Critical Discourse Analysis of the Arizona Immigration Law Debate. *Journal of Intercultural Communication, 10*(1), 1-15.
- Rasmussen Reports. (2010). 64% of Arizona voters favor state's tough immigration rules. Retrieved from www.rasmussenreports.com
- Brewer, J. (2010). Senate Bill 1070. Retrieved from www.azleg.gov
- Phoenix Rising. (2010). Phoenix Rising: A sign that says 'Adios Illegals' is held up by a protester at a rally in Phoenix, Arizona. Retrieved from www.phoenixrising.com
- Freedom Will Stand. (2010). A sign that says 'Adios Illegals' is held up by a protester at a rally in Phoenix, Arizona. Retrieved from blogs.azcentral.com/blogs/2010/06/prosb-1070-phoenix-rising-ral.php



**Communication and the Rhetoric of
Fear: An Analysis of Protest Signs
and Slogans Used in the Arizona
Immigration Law Debate**

by Hilda Escalera
Intercultural Communication

Rationale

The dichotomy between those who oppose the integration of undocumented immigrants within the dominant culture and those who welcome their co-cultural differences is reflected in the socio-politics of contemporary U.S. culture.

Background

- April 23, 2010-Governor Jan Brewer of Arizona signed Senate Bill 1070 into law
- Today nearly two-thirds of Arizona voters (64%) said they favor the state's toughened immigration rules -Rasmussen Reports poll released on April 28 (ASU)

Research Questions:

- 1: What ideologies do the slogans and signs used in protest rhetoric pertaining to the Arizona immigration law promote about immigrants in the United States?**
- 2. How do the anti-immigration protestors, through their signs and other protest discourse, attempt to define “immigrant”?**
- 2. What ideologies are emphasized through the way these images are portrayed in the media?**

Method: Ideological Critique

Ideology can have an assortment of meanings that refer to beliefs that are built upon central values that have political value (Zevallos 1).

Rhetorical artifacts are examined to determine a particular belief system.

Artifacts for Study

- Six signs and slogans used in protests from conservative websites and blogs
- One artifact illustrated in this presentation



Phoenix New Time Blogs: Featherhead Bastard:
http://blogs.phoenixnewtimes.com/bastard/2010/06/pro-sb_1070_phoenix_rising_ral.php

Analysis

- The statement mocks the “other” by using the “other’s” native language, Spanish, in “Adios.”
- The idea of racism is raised, as the actual immigration law does not define “illegal immigrants” as Latinos who speak Spanish.
- Illegal and legal immigrants are lumped together as illegals

Analysis Continued

- The sign demonstrates that the dominant culture does not take the co-culture seriously, by simply telling “them” (the “illegals”), which is used as a negative term, “goodbye, adios.”
- Ironically, colors associated with Latino culture are used to make a point of sarcastically bidding farewell to this co-culture.

Ideology in the Artifact

By lumping illegal and legal immigrants together and bidding all “adios,” those supporting the immigration bill demonstrate their adversity to cultural diversity.

These members of the dominant culture maintain a hegemonic or conservative ideology that suggests all “illegals” must be sent home, that is, out of the United States.

Conclusions and Implications

The protest artifacts communicate:

- Fear of the Other
- Hegemonic ideology
- Popular rhetoric about immigration often operates by representing the immigrant as a social “problem” U.S. citizens should fear
- Fear seems to manifest itself in anger and frustration, as the dominant “us” begin to fear change created by the changing face of the U.S.
- A greater understanding of the ideology these protest signs and slogans communicate may help to bring the discussion of multiculturalism to a more diplomatic and reflective level.

Bibliography

- Aronson, Elliot and Anthony Pratkanis. Age of Propaganda The Everyday Use and Abuse of Persuasion. Print. New York: Freeman and Company, 2001.
- Arizona State University. "Illegal Immigration: Perceptions and Realities." Morrison Institute for Public Policy. 2010. 31 Oct. 2010 <<http://morrisoninstitute.asu.edu/publications-reports/2010-illegal-immigration-perceptions-and-realities-1>>.
- Berger, Arthur Asa. Media and Communication Research Methods: An Introduction to Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches. Thousand Oaks, California: Sage Publications, 2000. Print.
- Brennen, Bonnie, and Margaret Duffy. "If A Problem Cannot Be Solved, Enlarge It's an Ideological Critique of the 'Other' in Pearl Harbor and September 11 New York Times Coverage." *Journalism Studies* 4.1 (2003): 3. *Communication & Mass Media Complete*. EBSCO. Web. 6 Nov. 2010.
- Cisneros, David. "Contaminated Communities: The Metaphor of "immigrant as Pollutant" in Media Representations of immigration." Print. Rhetoric and Public Affairs 11.4 (2008): 569-602.
- Chattahbox. "Arizona's Pro SB-1070 Rally: Birthers, Anti-Obama Extremism." 14 Nov. 2010 14 Nov. 2010 < <http://chattahbox.com/us/2010/06/07/arizonas-pro-sb-1070-rally-birthers-anti-obama-extremism/>>.
- Cooper, Martha. "Communication and Public Issues." Print. Analyzing Public Discourse (1985).
- Foss, Sonja K. Rhetorical Criticism: Exploration and Practice. 3rd ed. Illinois: Waveland Press, 2004. Print.
- Jacoby, Tamar. "Immigrant Nation." *Foreign Affairs* 85.6 (2006): 50-65. *Academic Search Premier*. EBSCO. Web. 5 Oct. 2010.
- Knight, Kathleen. "Transformations of the Concept of Ideology in the Twentieth Century. " *The American Political Science Review* 100.4 (2006): 619-626. *Academic Search Premier*. JSTOR. Web. 31 Oct. 2010.
- Larson, Charles U. Persuasion: Reception and Responsibility. 12th ed. Boston: Wadsworth Cengage Learning, 2010. Print.
- Mahony, Roger. "Thank you, Arizona! An ill-conceived Law could reinvigorate immigration Reform." EBSCO. Web. May 2010.
- Mathis, Sara. "Re-Defining Equality: An Ideological Critique of Educational Apartheid in the No Child Left Behind Act." *Conference Papers -- National Communication Association* (2007): 1. *Communication & Mass Media Complete*. EBSCO. Web. 6 Nov. 2010.
- Markert, John. "The Changing Face of Racial Discrimination: Hispanics as the Dominant Minority in the United States-A New Application of Power-Threat Theory." Critical Sociology forthcoming, 2008. Print.
- Morris, Charles E II, and Stephens H Browne. Reading on the Rhetoric of of Social Protest. Print. State College Pennsylvania Publishing, 2001.
- Orbe, Mark P. Constructing Co-Cultural Theory: An Explication of Culture, Power, and Communication. Print. Thousand Oaks, California: Sage Publications, 1998.
- Padget, Tim. "The 'Dangerous' Border: Actually One of America's Safest Places." Times. (2010). *Academic Search Premier*. Lexis-Nexis. Web. 28 Sept. 2010
- Rehmann, Jan. "Ideology Theory." *Historical Materialism* 15 (2007): 211-239. *Academic Search Premier*. JSTOR. Web. 1 Nov. 2010.
- Romero, Fernando. Hyper-Border The Contemporary U.S.-Mexico Border and its Future. Print New York: Princeton Press, 2008.
- Sheridan, Thomas. Arizona A History. Print. London: Arizona Press, 1995.
- Stewart, Charles J., et all. Persuasion and Social Movements. Prospect Heights, Illinois: Waveland press, 1994. Print.
- "U.S. Census Bureau." Immigration Data . 14 November 2010. <<http://www.census.gov/population/www/socdemo/immigration.html>>.
- Vásquez-León, Marcela. "Hispanic Farmers and Farmworkers: Social Networks, Institutional Exclusion, and Climate Vulnerability in Southeastern Arizona." *American Anthropologist* 111.3 (2009): 289-301. *Academic Search Premier*. JSTOR. Web. 5 Oct. 2010.
- Zevallos, Zulyeka. Because We Live in a Multicultural world: Multiculturalism as a Lived Ideology. Diss. Swinburne U of Technology. Sydney: Center for Research on Social Ideology, 2006. 31 Oct. 2010 <<http://www.crsi.mq.edu>>.