

# Róger Calero Defense Committee

## Comité de Defensa de Róger Calero

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## TO SUPPORTERS OF THE FIGHT TO STOP THE DEPORTATION OF RÓGER CALERO

Dear friends:

Since December 26, Róger Calero, associate editor of *Perspectiva Mundial* magazine who is facing a March 25 immigration hearing where the INS is moving to have him expelled from the country, has visited a dozen cities on national tour.

In Minnesota, Local 789 of the United Food and Commercial Workers, which represents the Dakota Premium Foods plant where Calero worked before he became a full-time journalist, organized a fundraiser for his defense. The social at the union hall drew over a 100 packinghouse workers, area unionists, immigrants' rights fighters, and others, to hear Calero and Local 789 president Bill Pearson speak, to socialize and party, and to donate over \$2,000 to the defense campaign.

The local 789 website — [www.ufcw789.org](http://www.ufcw789.org) — features the fight to stop the deportation of Calero, including a link to a 16-minute video of the speeches of Calero and Pearson at the union fundraiser.

In every city Calero has visited, he has received substantial press coverage — especially in the Spanish language media. Articles about his fight have appeared in *Hoy*, the Spanish-language New York daily; *El Día* in Houston; *Exito* in Chicago; *El Enfoque* in Perry, Iowa; *La Opinión* in Los Angeles; *Nuevo Mundo* in San José; *La Gente de Minneapolis*; among others. The *Omaha World-Tribune*; *Des Moines Register*; *New York Newsday*; the *Muslims Weekly*, which serves the entire northeast; as well as campus papers like the *Oracle* at Florida Southern University; have also run stories. *Telemundo* and *Univisión*, and other television and radio stations, have carried reports. Coverage of his fight has also appeared in international media like *Granma* from Cuba; *La Prensa* in El Salvador; and *Eleftherotypia*, the largest circulation daily paper in Greece.

In the Twin Cities, the *Minnesota Spokesman-Recorder*, the Black community newspaper, ran a major story on the Calero fight, reporting on the support it has won from Somali activists, local 789, and others. It reports on the sizable demon-

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stration in Lewiston, Maine, protesting anti-Somali scapegoating there, and notes the way the Calero fight is part of the broader fight against government immigration attacks. “[O]ur struggle is one of many struggles,” Calero is quoted, “and a victory for one is a victory for all.” The article reflects the well of support for Calero’s fight that can be tapped in the Black and other non-immigrant communities.

Many of the people who attended Calero’s meetings reported that they heard about them in the press. This includes many immigrant workers who came to talk about their own battles with the INS and to support Calero’s fight as a battering ram against *la migra*.

On February 8 Calero was a featured speaker at a fundraiser held at the Winston Unity Hall in New York for Farouk Abdel-Muhti, a Palestinian activist who has been held in INS detention for over nine months in New Jersey without any charges. Calero has won support from and extended support to a number of fighters held in prison and fighting frame-up charges, including Abdel-Muhti; Roger Warren, an imprisoned gold miner framed up for his participation in a hard-fought strike in Yellow Knife, Canada; and Lynne Stewart, a New York attorney who is facing federal charges for her activities serving as defense lawyer for Sheik Abdel-Rahman.

#### **TOUR HELPS BROADEN SUPPORT FOR CALERO, PUT PRESSURE ON THE INS, AND RAISE URGENTLY NEEDED FUNDS**

Letters protesting the INS “removal” drive against Calero have been sent by Juan Gonzalez, a New York *Daily News* columnist who is president of the National Association of Hispanic Journalists; Patrick Young, program director of CARECEN in Hempstead, New York; Jim Olesen, president of UFCW local 1149 in Perry, Iowa, another packing plant that Calero had worked at; Lennox Hinds, vice-president of the International Association of Democratic Lawyers; Edward Leahy, coordinator of the Immigrant Rights Network of Iowa - Nebraska; Rev. Dr. Earl Kooperkamp, rector of St. Mary’s Episcopal Church in Harlem; the South Asian Network of southern California; and the Coalition for Humane immigrant Rights of Los Angeles.

An open letter asking farmers and farmworkers to lend their support to Calero’s fight is being circulated by Randy Jasper, dairy farmer from Muskoda, Wisconsin; Larry Ginter, farmer from Rhodes, Iowa; Luis Tlaseca, a mushroom worker and coordinator of the Comité de Apoyo a los Trabajadores Agrícolas in Kennett Square, Pennsylvania; and Willie Head, tobacco farmer from Pavo, Georgia.

Formal endorsements of the defense committee have begun to come in. Endorsers in the New York area include Kathy Andrade, of Circulo Social and Cultural Salvadoreño; Nellie Baily, of the Harlem Tenants Council; Lisel Burns, leader, Brooklyn Ethical Culture Society; CARECEN-NY; Martha Cameron, of Justice for Detainees; the CCNY Student Liberation Action Movement; Ted Glick, national coordinator of the Independent Progressive Politics Network; Bobby Khan, director, Coney island Avenue Project; and the People’s Organization for Progress in Newark.

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From donations through the mail and contributions won through the tour, we have raised over \$24,000 so far to cover legal and publicity costs.

### **CALERO TO GET BACK ON THE ROAD LEADING UP TO MARCH 25 HEARING**

Calero is now putting in a two week stint as acting editor of *Perspectiva Mundial*, after which he will set out on the road again, with tour stops planned in Seattle; Detroit; Cleveland; Boston; Charlotte; Birmingham; Atlanta; Utah and Colorado; Washington, DC; Philadelphia; and Chicago for the second time. There are still open dates – call us with your request now!

In addition, Bill Pearson, president of UFCW local 789 and co-chair of the Róger Calero Defense Committee, has agreed to spend two days touring in Iowa and Nebraska to speak about Calero's fight.

### **FUND DRIVE TO THE FRONT!**

Virtually all the funds raised since Calero was arrested have been spent on attorneys' fees, travel costs, printing literature, telephone calls, and the other expenses of starting up the defense committee and launching the political and legal fight.

To take the next steps, it is imperative that supporters around the world organize to make fund raising a central priority over the next two months. Having the funds to meet increasing legal expenses through the March hearing, keep Calero on the road, and put out literature, displays and other materials, is crucial to mounting the most effective challenge to the INS.

Supporters in some areas are scheduling special fundraising activities that can also serve as focal points for expanding publicity and support. In Chicago, local defense committee partisans are organizing a fundraising dinner and meeting for March 1. Supporters are organizing to bring food and other donations for the dinner and to build the program widely to maximize the fundraising potential for the event.

In every area, Calero supporters can meet, draw together the widest possible lists of potential contributors, and organize to send fund letters and make phone calls to ask for donations. Previous contributors can be contacted again. New lists of potential contributors can be put together, drawing on the ideas of area supporters from other groups they are active in, lists of professors at area campuses, union leaders, civil libertarians, and others.

In some cities, campus speaking engagements for Calero, or for another defense spokesperson, including officers of the committee, can be set up with honoraria. Students and professors at Sarah Lawrence college in New York are working on such a meeting for Calero on March 12.

Another way to raise funds is to put donation cans out on defense literature tables at demonstrations, political meetings and other public activities in your area.

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Supporters should discuss adopting local fund goals and organize to campaign to raise as much as possible. The defense committee has opened its own bank account. Tax exempt contributions can continue to be made out to the Political Rights Defense Fund.

### **DEEPENING THE CAMPAIGN OF LETTERS OF PROTEST TO THE INS AND WINNING ENDORSERS FOR THE DEFENSE COMMITTEE**

It is crucial that we keep the heat on the INS. Showering them with a continuing stream of protest letters, as well as filled-up petitions, is the best way to keep the pressure on them to back off their efforts to deport Róger Calero.

We are winning an impressive list of endorsements for the Calero committee, reflecting the openings among defenders of freedom of the press, supporters of the rights of immigrants and trade unions, and of civil liberties in the face of growing government attacks. As the list expands, the defense committee will publish and update the list of endorsers for use by supporters.

Let's step it up!

In solidarity,



John Studer  
National Coordinator



Pamela Vossen  
National Co-chair, Róger Calero Defense  
Committee

Attachments