

GBIO itself suggested that the Haitian Nursing Home campaign gained broad support “as many GBIO members worried that the maltreatment of workers was also affecting the quality of care elderly parents were receiving in nursing homes” (GBIO 2008). Although this rationale for broad-based mobilization is framed narrowly, with the treatment of one’s relatives rather than social justice driving the appeal, there is no doubt that GBIO has begun to reach across class and race lines in this nursing-home worker campaign. Although the home health-care workers’ concerns are frequently posed in terms of class rather than migration, it is not difficult to see ways in which immigration might be made more central to the GBIO’s agenda.

Although it is clear that there has been extensive coalition building among Boston’s diverse populations for more than a decade, yet the Black-brown coalition that many academics and activists have been anticipating does *not* seem to be the pressing order of the day. In MIRA, where immigration issues are front and center, racial difference recedes—and at GBIO where race is at the forefront of the organization, immigration tends to slip from view. The coalition building that is being undertaken should not be underestimated. It is difficult and important work that operates on a smaller scale aimed at rather different coalition partners than the academic literature had led us to expect. The key question for most individuals and organizations in Boston at the end of the first decade of the twenty-first century is not identity politics versus coalition building, but rather which of the many possible coalitions should one join? Which of the competing alliances and umbrella organizations will likely come to dominate the political landscape? Or if no one organization triumphs, how will multiple coalitions operate together? These questions take us beyond the issues of whether immigrants and African Americans are forming Black-brown coalitions to ask instead: How are immigrant and racial identities being reworked and by whom? And to what ends? Our research has allowed us to appreciate the coalitional work that is going on today while simultaneously recognizing that it is as of yet a considerable distance from large scale African American-immigrant coalition.

QUEER MIGRATIONS: TENSIONS OVER IMMIGRATION, SEX, AND FAITH

While MIRA and GBIO are the most prominent organizations working at the intersection of race and immigration, they were not the only coalition initiatives to emerge from our research. In fact, connections between issues of sexual orientation and immigration were equally, if not more, pressing. Looking back over our interviews, we have been struck by the growing political activity at the intersection of immigration and gay rights. These efforts are not yet institutionalized in a robust fashion. Nevertheless, the energy, spontaneity, and proliferation of these connections demand further attention. Building an immigrant-gay rights coalition is no easy task; it requires rethinking existing conceptions of both discrimination and affiliation; there is growing evidence that such reconfigurations are under way, that have, as yet, received too little scholarly attention.

Evidence that relations between sexual orientation and immigration are changing is manifested both positively (in a variety of efforts bringing the two social movements together) and negatively (in the opposition that such political work frequently generates). Not all welcome this re-imagining—many oppose linking the political fate of these two traditionally distinct identities. Of course, there have always been gay immigrants, but in decades past there was little or no political space for embracing both identifications. Rather, individuals were pushed to choose one identity over the other, thereby leaving the gay rights organizations vulnerable to criticisms that they are presumptively a white mobilization—and conversely, leaving most discussions of immigration silent on questions of sexual orientation (Somerville 1994; Cohen 1997).

The movement to legalize same-sex marriage in Massachusetts (MASS Equality) has loomed large in Boston politics over the last decade. It placed the actions of the state legislature and state Supreme Court at the center of the debate on the question of gay marriage. Advocates for and against changing marriage law converged in Boston after the Massachusetts Supreme Court gave the right to same-sex

couples to wed. Even after this decision, some in the legislature sought to prohibit such unions by introducing anti-gay marriage ballot initiatives only to be defeated during constitutional conventions. Pro-gay campaigners anticipated this possibility and used their extensive network and press connections to defeat this rearguard action (Somos Latinos LGBT 2008).

Despite the ultimate same-sex marriage victory, the political campaign fueled tensions among residents of the commonwealth. The debate was not limited to the halls of the State House but extended into many political arenas and had input from many constituencies. Churches, universities, labor unions, and employers had to think about the implications that such unions would have. Immigrants were not exempt from the debate, both because many immigrants were themselves gay and wondered how changing marriage laws might intersect with questions of immigration status, and because many immigrants viewed issues of sexual discrimination broadly and thus considered sexual discrimination as part of a linked fate. Not surprisingly, immigrants, like the rest of the population, are divided over the question of gay marriage. Some sought refuge in Catholic and Evangelist churches, and denounced the new law. Others turned a blind eye to the issue and remained within their immigrant communities, ostracizing any gay or lesbian members while avoiding political action. Still others welcomed the development as a way to break free from the constraints of conservative groups and families and worked to build a progressive coalition that might address discrimination in many forms.

Perhaps the most striking evidence signaling an immigrant-gay rights alliance can be found by comparing photographs taken at the 2006 and 2008 immigrant rallies. In 2006, almost no rainbow flags were to be seen—by 2008, they cover the scene. Take for example two photographs from the Chicago immigrant rallies in figures 1 and 2: in 2006, over 400,000 marched in the streets holding flags from many nations, but note that there are few if any rainbow flags in that demonstration. By 2008, the scene has changed dramatically. Now not only do rainbow flags abound, there are several banners declaring immigrant-gay affili-