

Moral Monday Speech — SB 153 & Voting Rights

Imagine a neighbor. Let's call him Mateo. He came here from Mexico thirty years ago. He's married, with two grown kids — both U.S. citizens. His daughter's in college, studying to be a social worker. He and his son run a roofing business people trust and respect. He pays his taxes. He owns his home. He's never been in a bit of trouble in thirty years.

He's done everything right — except he still doesn't have all the papers this country demands of him.

And now, under SB 153, Mateo and his family are afraid. Afraid of a traffic stop. Afraid to drive to a job. Afraid to go grocery shopping. Afraid, some nights, to answer their own front door.

Thirty years in this community. And now more than ever, they're afraid of us.

They are afraid because Mateo and his family live under SB153 now.

We don't have to imagine this story. We HAVE neighbors just like Mateo.

On June 24, 2026, the NC General Assembly overrode Governor Stein's veto and made Senate Bill 153 — the so-called "North Carolina Border Protection Act" — into law.

Let me tell you plainly what this law does, because they wrote it in language designed to keep you from noticing.

It forces our local police into ICE's direct supervision — turns neighbors into suspects, turns a traffic stop into a deportation.

It reaches into public housing, into health and employment benefits — it takes the safety net itself and turns it into a screening tool.

And it punishes any city, any county, any campus, any community that tries to protect its own people — opens them up to lawsuits for the **crime of caring for their neighbors.**

This is a law that turns hospitality into a liability.

In every faith tradition represented on this stage tonight, in all our sacred books, we are told it is our duty to welcome the stranger. SB 153 is the government telling us to close that book.

But here's what I need you to understand tonight, because it's the reason we're standing here together and not just at a vigil.

A law like this doesn't get undone by asking nicely. It gets undone at the ballot box.

And the people who wrote SB 153 know that. So at the very same time they're writing immigrant families out of this state's protection, they're also making sure fewer of us can vote them out.

Let me say that again: **at the very same time that the legislators who wrote SB153 are writing immigrant families out of this state's protection, they're also making sure fewer of us can vote them out of office!**

This week, right here in Guilford County, our Board of Elections is deciding...

- Whether to close early voting sites at A&T and at UNCG.
- Whether to pull sites out of Black neighborhoods that have used them for years.
- Whether to end Sunday voting altogether.

Let's be honest about who that hits. It hits students who don't have a car to get across town. It hits Black voters in neighborhoods that have fought for every polling place they've ever had. It hits working people who vote after church on Sunday — "souls to the polls" — which is not a slogan, it's the very tradition this Moral Monday movement grew out of.

SB 153 and the Board of Elections vote are **not two separate fights**. They are **the same fight**. One tells immigrant families they don't belong here. The other tells students and Black voters and Sunday churchgoers that their vote doesn't either. Both are about who gets to have a say in what this state becomes.

And I'll tell you something else: this is not permanent. Virginia had a law just like ours — expanding ICE cooperation, mandating enforcement, spreading fear through immigrant communities. And Virginians voted in new leadership, and that law is being undone right now. It can happen here too. **But only if the people this law harms can still get to the polls to do it. And this law harms all of us and all our neighborhoods.**

SO HERE IS OUR CHARGE

We do not close doors on Friday for Muslim prayers. We open them.

We do not close doors on Saturday for Sabbath prayers. We open them.

We do not close doors on Sunday for worship. We open them.

So help us open these doors and keep them open:

- Show up at the Board of Elections meeting tomorrow. Send your comments. Bring a neighbor.
- Register a voter. Drive a voter. Accompany a fearful voter to the polls. Adopt a family who's living in fear tonight because of SB 153.

That family I told you about — Mateo's family and others like them - they are why we're here. We are here as a promise.

A promise, that in Guilford County, in North Carolina, the doors stay open
—

Because on Sunday, and Saturday, and every day

The doors of this democracy are supposed to be open to all of us.