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Guadagno scapegoating immigrants for political advantage

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Republican gubernatorial candidate Kim Guadagno has built her political career on race-baiting and immigrant bashing. Those of us from Monmouth County know this very well.

Her recent campaign ad attempting to blame her opponent Phil Murphy for the murder of three Newark youths some years ago by an undocumented immigrant is the latest example of her political opportunism. Instead of focusing on legitimate disagreements over immigration policy, the Guadagno ad flashes a brown face on camera and then suggests that Murphy is sympathetic to criminal aliens.

Nothing thrills Guadagno more than villainizing immigrants. Her recent political ad paints all immigrants with a broad brush as criminals and undesirables in a move reminiscent of President Donald Trump a year ago.

Her cynical use of the immigrant community can be traced back to her tenure as Monmouth County sheriff from Jan. 1, 2008 to Jan. 19, 2010. She distinguished herself by her anti-immigrant sentiment. To understand what a political charlatan Kim Guadagno really is we have to look at her implementation of the 287g program in Monmouth County. The program permits local and county law enforcement to inquire about the immigrant status of all those detained by police, even those picked up for minor offenses.

The population of undocumented immigrants in Monmouth County was miniscule at the time and remains so to this day. Not only was their number small but her own reports from 2008 indicate that only 1 percent of the Monmouth County Jail population was foreign born, and of that even fewer were undocumented immigrants.

Study after study has shown that immigrants in general are among the most law-abiding communities in the country.

A report published by the Cato Institute on March 15 found that in 2014 among people aged 18-54, 1.53 percent of natives are incarcerated, as are 0.85 percent of undocumented immigrants and 0.47 percent of documented immigrants, according to the review of comparative incarceration rates.

Also, this year, the Sentencing Project, a criminal justice research and advocacy group, found that “foreign-born residents of the United States commit crime less often than native-born

citizens.” The Sentencing Project study even goes so far as to suggest that increased immigration “may have contributed to the historic drop in crime rates” since 1990.

There were similar studies with similar findings at the time Guadagno was Monmouth County sheriff. So, armed with those facts what did this self-proclaimed crime fighter decide to concentrate her efforts on? The undocumented immigrant community.

It was never about crime fighting for Guadagno. By emphasizing a crime problem that did not exist she could point to the community-at-large and claim to be protecting them from the immigrants. A classic divide-and-conquer political strategy. Scapegoat immigrants, drive up fear, create division and use it to your political advantage. She used this campaign of fear as a tool to advance her political ambitions.

It worked.

Christie tapped her to be his running mate in 2010 and she is now using the same gambit to propel herself to the highest executive position in New Jersey. She was Trumpesque before Trump announced his presidential run in 2016 accusing immigrants of being rapists and drug dealers.

She is part of a national, xenophobic epidemic that seeks to scapegoat immigrants. This tendency surfaces every few decades with tremendous ferocity until everyone eventually realizes that we are all immigrants. Guadagno is a symptom of that national malady in New Jersey.

Eight years as lieutenant governor have not changed Kim Guadagno. She will say anything about immigrants to get elected whether it is true or not.