

Hispanic Christians Disappointed in 'Rhetorical Pornography' After Congressman's 'Wetback' Slur

Congressman Don Young is facing plenty of backlash for his "wetback" slur.

Among those calling him out are Samuel Rodriguez, president of the National Hispanic Christian Leadership Conference, and Robert Gittelson, president of Conservatives for Comprehensive Immigration Reform.

During a radio interview last week, Young said when he was a boy, his father "used to hire 50 to 60 wetbacks to pick tomatoes" on his farm. Young later said he meant no disrespect, but the Hispanic community isn't letting it go.

Rodriguez and Gittelson offered the following statement:

"As Christ followers we stand committed to an agenda that replaces rhetorical pornography with the redemptive language of love, tolerance, compassion and reconciliation. The pejorative term 'wetback' reminds us of a time in our nation's history when racial epithets stood unchecked, while many of our brothers and sisters of color lived in a segregated society, demeaned and forced to use separate restrooms, restaurants and even drinking fountains.

"As a modern society, we have for the most part evolved beyond these offensive and divisive words and deeds. And yet, clearly we have not yet reached the promised land of a fully and harmoniously post-racial America.

"It is our considered opinion that America cannot and will not

be a fully integrated nation until we have passed an immigration reform that allows for the just integration of all members of our society, including the 11,000,000 undocumented individuals that remain hidden in the shadows of the American Dream.

“However, even in the wake of this extremely unhelpful comment by a longtime member of Congress, we remain optimistic. In the course of our many meetings with members of both parties in Congress, we have never experienced anything that remotely resembles racial intolerance or insensitivity.

“On the contrary, almost every member of Congress that we have met with has expressed a strong and sincere desire to work toward a complete reform of our broken immigration system, and the integration of the undocumented into society.

“Therefore, we pray that this unfortunate mis-statement by one member of Congress does not, in any way, derail all of the fine work that is being done in Washington to fix our broken immigration system. We trust that it will not. We sincerely believe that there is an abundance of good will emanating from both parties on this issue.

“In closing, while we repudiate the comment by Congressman Young in the strongest possible terms, we encourage our friends in Congress to remain committed to the task of legislating immigration solutions that respects the innate dignity of every person, while also adhering to our shared commitment to the Rule of Law.”