

OUR STORIES, OUR FUTURES

THE VOICES OF IMMIGRANT COMMUNITIES

LA RED
A CAMPAIGN OF FAITH IN ACTION



LA RED 2020 LISTENING CAMPAIGN

A PARTICIPATORY ACTION
RESEARCH PROJECT

“

A world without ICE is a world where the undocumented won't have to live with the fear of looking over their shoulders constantly or being deported to a country where their lives are in danger because of civil or political unrest.

”



RESEARCH TEAM

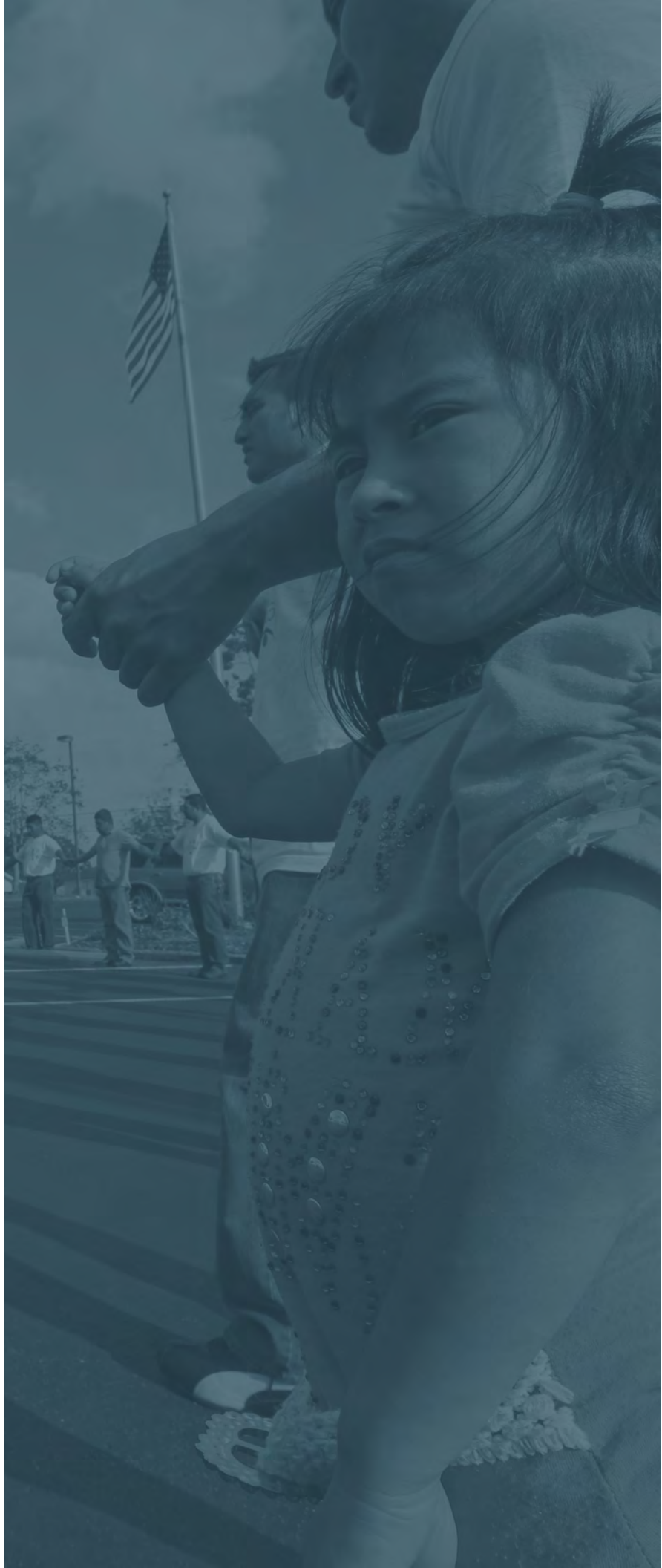
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Faith in Action (formerly PICO National Network) was founded in 1972 as a regional training institute to support neighborhood organizations in California. In 2004, seeking greater impact, clergy and grassroots leaders initiated a process that led to Faith in Action's reinvention as a national network with the capacity to run major national and state campaigns and a core commitment to racial justice. We are the largest faith-based community-organizing network in the country, with 45 member organizations in 27 states and 200 cities and towns, 300 paid staff, and tens of thousands of volunteers based in more than 3,000 congregations from more than 40 faith denominations. Faith in Action has 12 state power networks, a national policy and communications office in Washington, D.C., and alliances with labor groups, organizing networks, and policy groups. A growing majority of the communities where we organize are communities of color, and we invest heavily in work that builds leadership and power among those who are most directly impacted by racial and economic injustice, including formerly incarcerated citizens, immigrants, and low-wage workers.

LA RED is the immigrant justice program of Faith in Action. LA RED stands for what immigrant leaders and clergy across the Faith in Action network and country are fighting for: liberation, action, respect, equity and dignity. LA RED leads with the community's experience and story, affirming that all immigrants are deserving of belonging and protection. LA RED pursues pro-immigrant legislation, through national and local efforts and nationally focuses on dismantling the mass detention and deportation machine and ending the cooperation between local governments and Immigration Customs Enforcement (ICE) and Customs and Border Protection (CBP). LA RED seeks to replace the dominant narrative of othering and criminalization with a narrative that affirms all immigrants are deserving of protection from unjust laws while building power to achieve a legislative solution in 2021.



LA RED's leadership base is comprised of undocumented, DACAmented, and recently legalized immigrants predominantly from Latin America. LA RED's immigrant leaders live in mixed-status families with little to no prospect of getting a green card or traveling outside of the United States. Like so many undocumented families, LA RED's leaders have all experienced first-hand the violence of the current administration's anti-immigrant policy. They also face a multitude of hurdles to working, driving, and access to healthcare. Living undocumented in the United States was always difficult, but the last four years have upended the lives of thousands of people in the network.

In the wake of the 2016 presidential election, LA RED leaders, facing unprecedented attacks and threat of deportation, decided to defend themselves and each other to assure that no one stands alone. In the span of three and a half years, over 1000 congregations in the network declared themselves sanctuary or solidarity congregations. LA RED worked to actively engage approximately 407 congregations and over 8,800 leaders on issues of immigrant justice; led 352 trainings on DACA renewal, Deportation Defense, Know Your Rights, Rapid Response and Accompaniment; launched 17 rapid response networks across the country and trained responders to document immigration enforcement activity and support community members targeted by ICE; and built relationships with elected officials from the city council level to the congressional level to move pro-immigrant policies forward.



Rosa Gutierrez, a single mother from El Salvador and leader of the Congregation Action Network, took sanctuary in December 2018 after learning that ICE agents were coming to detain her at her home. Eighteen months later and after a strong organizing and advocacy campaign, ICE granted Rosa a temporary stay of removal giving her the opportunity to leave sanctuary without the fear of detention and deportation. She has become a community organizer and a public advocate for immigrant rights in the Washington D.C. metro area and nationally.

For many of LA RED's leaders, 2020 has presented a new level of anxiety, waiting to see who will win the November presidential election. Further, the COVID-19 pandemic and exclusion from stimulus relief has created an uncertain future as immigrant workers are forced to choose between a paycheck and their health.

In the spring of 2020, LA RED engaged in strategic thinking focused on 2021 and beyond. The process revealed concerns; LA RED did not have a clear sense of vision and priorities of undocumented leaders for the future. In response, LA RED Comandantes, a steering committee of majority directly affected immigrant organizers in the network, held a retreat to decide how to engage leaders in establishing an organizing agenda for the next few years that was deeply rooted in the stories, desires, and leadership of immigrant leaders.

The decision was to launch a listening campaign designed and focused on building community, identify the priorities for families in the network and create a pathway for undocumented leaders to determine the vision for future campaigns. The listening campaign aimed to:

- Create spaces for LA RED's undocumented and mixed-status leaders to share their pain and their dreams
- Center the experiences and leadership of persons directly affected in LA RED's organizing
- Shape a collective vision for the next two years with the full promise of respect, equity, and dignity as cornerstones
- Clarify undocumented families' priorities for policy change at the state and federal level
- Guide LA RED's local and national organizing campaign work within a potentially new political landscape
- Provide safe spaces for Black immigrants to share their experiences and create a pathway for Black immigrants' leadership and voice in LA RED

KEY TERMS

LA RED Comandantes


Steering committee consisting of immigration organizers from Faith in Action federations. Almost all of the members are directly impacted by our nation's unjust immigration laws. LA RED Comandantes was formed after the last national push for comprehensive immigration reform to invest in the professional development of upcoming immigrant organizers in the network.

Leaders

Refers to grassroots members of Faith in Action's 45 member organizations. Faith in Action believes that the people closest to the pain are the expert voices on a problem and provide the most essential leadership in creating systemic change.

Federations

Faith in Action uses the term federation to refer to 45 member grassroots organizations in 27 states and 200 cities and towns in the United States.



Listening session participants were invited to assert their dignity and worth. Therefore, each listening session started with these affirmations:

“You and your experiences and hopes for the future are needed for us to lead in a different way and put together a platform and fight that is about collective liberation.”

“Centered in our humanity, without our worth being conditioned on how much we work or who has documents and who doesn’t. We matter because of who we are. We matter because of what we have to say.”

Furthermore, leaders were invited to use their imagination and work together to “create our federal immigration platform and agenda” as well as to “help shape local campaign work.”


Leaders welcomed the listening sessions as **healing spaces** because they were an opportunity to **speak and be heard**. Some leaders described the listening sessions as the practice of **solidarity**.

Spanning two months, the listening campaign:

- Trained 60 immigrant organizers and directly impacted leaders to facilitate sessions in their communities
- Engaged 16 Faith in Action Federations
- Conducted 100 sessions in 13 states and the District of Columbia
- Listened to 715 immigrant leaders with non-permanent immigration status, either undocumented, from mixed-status families, people with precarious status such as DACA, TPS, or visas
- Spoke with leaders from Latin America, Africa, the Caribbean and South Asia, with the majority from Latin America

The success of the listening campaign highlights the fact that LA RED has cultivated immigrants into leadership roles and has encouraged critical analysis through leadership development strategies.

Lastly, given its national scale, LA RED expects the results to contribute significantly to the fields of immigration organizing, advocacy, and policy because it captures the current conditions of life for undocumented and other vulnerable immigrants that have resulted from three and a half years of anti-immigrant policies from the Trump administration and the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic.



Michel Foucault, said, “Knowledge is Power”. The construction of “knowledge” has traditionally been the jurisdiction of academics, of the elite of society. But we know that oppressed people have deep knowledge of the horrific effects of political and economic systems. This hard-earned knowledge has been historically “subjugated” as Foucault claimed. Erasing the wisdom and knowledge of our people is crucial in order to maintain the fiction of our national myths - a land of opportunity, freedom, and justice for all. By “subjugating” the knowledge of the poor and privileging the knowledge of the white male elite, the unjust status quo is maintained. LA RED’s listening campaign is a project of liberating immigrant knowledge and building power through a process of collective knowledge construction with undocumented and mixed-status families.

In the 1960s, Latin American academics starting with Colombian sociologist Orlando Fals Borda, began to develop a liberatory research paradigm that centered oppressed people in the design and implantation of social science research. They called this new revolutionary research paradigm, Participatory Action Research (PAR). They argued that it wasn’t enough to study society, the point was to change it. Therefore, they incorporate ACTION in the blueprint of PAR.

In PAR, oppressed people are the real subjects of research. They investigate their own reality by developing questions and collecting and analyzing data in a systematic way. Then they use what is learned from their research to develop and organize public action to change their communities. Using this research/action paradigm allows a group to create a safe space and mechanisms through which people can develop critical analytic skills; dissect their oppressions/pain; own an analysis of power dynamics; and construct knowledge through which they can exercise their power for social change.

PAR’s central operating principle is the conviction that the experience, knowledge, and wisdom born from pain and oppression is the single most important variable for social change.

To analyze hundreds of pages of data from the 100 sessions, LA RED employed PAR’s anti-racist Latin American research paradigm that shifts decision-making power from academic researchers to people who are directly affected. To this end, 14 immigrant organizers were trained in PAR, and then analyzed reports from all the listening sessions. Through an iterative process, they collectively decided on the key themes described below. The collective co-construction of the knowledge presented below was, in itself, a process of building collective power.

Through Participatory Action Research, LA RED demonstrated its ability to bring a broad base of individuals who have been disenfranchised at all levels of our democracy into the power-building act of knowledge creation.

Participatory Action Research on this scale is unprecedented. PAR projects usually emerge from local communities and focus on local problems and solutions. The fact that LA RED has successfully conducted a project at the national level with 715 respondents is evidence of a network that has built the internal capacity of its organizing staff by establishing:

- internal discipline
- cohesive visioning and operating principles that center immigrant leaders
- unified goals
- robust implementation and accountability structures

Listening Campaign PAR Phase	Actions Taken by LA RED Comandantes
Determine Organizing Goal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • create spaces for LA RED's undocumented and mixed-status leaders to share their pain and their dreams • center the experiences and leadership of persons directly affected in LA RED's organizing • shape a collective vision for the next two years with the full promise of respect, equity, and dignity as cornerstones • clarify priorities for undocumented families for policy change at the state and federal level • guide LA RED's local and national organizing campaign work within a potentially new political landscape • provide specific spaces for Black immigrants to share their experiences and create a pathway for Black immigrants' leadership and voice in LA RED

Listening Campaign PAR Phase	Actions Taken by LA RED Comandantes
Choose Research Methods	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • selected one to one conversations with leaders to invite them to participate in listening sessions (focus groups) • chose listening sessions (focus groups) as key methods of data collection
Identify Research Sample	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • chose LA RED leaders with non-permanent immigration status as the participants of listening sessions (focus groups) • decided that Black immigrants would be provided with their own focus group to ensure their voices were heard • conducted outreach to federations with immigrant membership
Develop Research Plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • developed a structure for the listening campaign that included training facilitators, initial one to one conversations, data collection listening sessions with 15 additional minutes for organizing updates • established a timeline for the entire project
Produce Research Tools / Instruments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • crafted framing for listening sessions (focus groups) • generated research questions • designed guide/toolkit for facilitators to run focus groups

Listening Campaign PAR Phase	Actions Taken by LA RED Comandantes
Train Listening Session Facilitators	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> designed and conducted two zoom training sessions trained 60 facilitators
Conduct Research	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 100 listening sessions (focus groups) conducted by immigrant organizers and immigrant leaders themselves zoom was mostly used due to COVID-19 precautions
Data Entry	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> listening sessions (focus groups) facilitators used an online platform to upload notes from each session
Data Analysis by LA RED Comandantes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> were trained in PAR research and qualitative data coding developed a codebook and coded all listening session (focus group) reports wrote analysis memos for each listening session (focus group) report met four times to reach a consensus on findings met to develop recommendations on findings
Findings & Recommendations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> circulated draft of findings to directors and organizers to get feedback on findings and suggestions for recommendations held calls with network directors and organizers to get feedback on findings and suggestions for recommendations

Listening Campaign PAR Phase	Actions Taken by LA RED Comandantes
Organizing Action	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • national organizing zoom meeting held on October 14 to share findings and plan for organizing action moving forward • feedback from this national call discussed at LA RED Comandantes meeting and integrated into report
Changing Public Opinion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • immigration movement briefing on Oct. 28, 2020 to impact public narratives • action plan currently emerging with an organizing planning meeting set for Dec 8-10, 2020 that will include many of the participants in the campaign

Participant Anonymity

Participants in the listening sessions were undocumented, DACAmented or generally vulnerable to targeting and deportation by the administration. Therefore, in order for leaders to share deeply their pain and their dreams, all personal identifying characteristics were protected. Leaders in each listening session were informed in the following way:

“Your leadership and voice are very important. In order to capture all this important information, we will have someone taking notes. Notes will not indicate who said what or the names of people participating in today’s session. The notes will only capture the themes and experiences and desires of this group. We will share these notes with [federation] and also LA RED, Faith in Action’s national immigrant rights campaign. At the end of today’s session, we will share the next steps and offer ways you can keep exercising leadership on the ground and on the national level.”

Participating Faith in Action Federations

- Congregation Action Network (D.C., VA, MD),
- Congregations Rising in AZ Organizing Neighborhoods,
- NM Comunidades en Acción y de Fe,
- Essex County Community Organization (MA),
- Faith in Florida,
- Faith in New Jersey,
- Faith in New York
- Granite State Organizing Project (NH),
- ISAIAH (MN),
- L.A. Voice (CA),
- Massachusetts Communities Action Network,
- Missouri Faith Voices,
- Sacramento Act (CA),
- San Diego Organizing Project (CA),
- Together Colorado,
- True North (CA)



FINDINGS PART 1: EFFECTS OF THE CURRENT IMMIGRATION SYSTEM

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LISTENING SESSION QUESTIONS:

In the past 3 years, we have seen more anti-immigrant rhetoric and/or more anti-immigrant laws passed.

1. How has being undocumented in this type of environment impacted you or your family members?
2. What has been your experience with the police/sheriffs?
3. What has been your experience with ICE and Customs and Border Protection (CBP)?

Leaders responded to these questions with the following key themes.

FEAR

Leaders identified five fundamental ways in which they experience fear.

Fear of Family Separation

Fear of separation from family was the single most often stated response in the listening campaign. Participants expressed living in extreme, trauma-inducing fear of losing a family member to detention and deportation. Participants also expressed fear of being detained and deported and leaving family members behind. Living with the ever-present uncertainty of what will happen to family deported and those left behind in the U.S. was described as overwhelming and the source of deep anxiety. Fear of losing one's family member(s) was at the root of all other fears. Moreover, given the percentage of mixed-status families living in the U.S., participants described transmitting fear to other family members who may have documentation.

"My family is scared to go out. They even have fear of going grocery shopping."

"We can't be outside without the fear of being separated from our children from just a traffic stop."

“Once I was also visiting the camp outside the detention center and we saw a family drive in to the entrance, two grandparents and a child in the back. The grandmother got out of the car, she was dropping off a backpack with clothes and money for her son who was about to be deported. The child in the back was screaming loud, like in pain. We approached the grandfather and the child who were in the car to check in on them. The grandpa opened up to us and explained that his son, who was about to be deported, had spent most of his life in the United States.

For one small thing, he couldn’t qualify for DACA. The child in the back, his grandson, was crying because he wanted to say bye to his Dad in detention, and that’s why he was so upset. The grandfather told us that they did everything they could to fight the case, because his son is a responsible father and needs to take care of his 9-year-old son. But the judge found no reason to keep him in the country. The Judge said that the grandparents could take care of the little one and did not see any harm in having a child lose his father, because the grandparents could take care of him. The right from being with his father was taken from this child. It’s a broken system.”



Fear of Police and ICE

Fear of police and ICE defined immigrant leaders responses in the listening campaign. Police and ICE were used interchangeably to denote a law enforcement apparatus that they characterized as deceitful, racist, unjust, and inhumane. People shared stories of intimidation and abuse. They often highlighted the absence of information about their rights or procedures during interactions with police and/or ICE. Racial profiling and police stops while driving without a license was mentioned in almost every session. Fear of the police and ICE is so intense and all-encompassing it was described several times as “terror.”


“A family friend’s husband crashed and passed away. And because she was undocumented, she didn’t press charges on the person who murdered her husband. She had to drive because she didn’t have a choice, she was pulled over three times and she got her driver’s license taken away.”

“We were stopped for a broken window but the police didn’t even bother checking to see if the window was actually broken, they just asked for a driver’s license.”

“ICE no es bueno para nadie, tengo 26 años aquí en los EEUU pero no me siento tranquilo para salir.”

“Con la policía, necesitaba ayuda pero me querían llevar de preso entonces nunca más llamare a ellos.”





“Yes, the past few years have affected us because my parents don’t drive anymore for fear of being stopped.”


“We were totally profiled, targeted during DUI, they were only stopping the older cars, or those who looked like Mexicans. But they didn’t ask if we had been drinking.”

“Mental illness, autistic, you don’t need to arrest them if they are having a case like that, if police are trained. These are instances that should be handled by others rather than police.”

“The interactions with police have driven me to change the way I register my vehicles and the manner in which I approach common situations. The police look for any reason to stop people of color. This is what puts fear into the community and creates a rift between the police and those who they are supposed to protect.”

“My son was born here and experienced racism from citizens. He was bullied, kids were calling him racial slurs although he was born here. Finally my son hit back but the mother of the boy who got hit got the cops involved. I did not know my rights and that’s why I am afraid.”


“They [police] pull us over because we are driving w/out a license. There were three people in the car. They took 2 people because they didn’t have papers. Then they always hand you over to ICE.”





Fear of Losing Status

In listening sessions, where individuals with DACA, TPS, or some other status were present, fear of losing that particular status was identified as dominating their daily life. These statuses seem to afford people some semblance of stability, even if not forever, and the possibility of losing that stability causes people intense fear. These temporary statuses are perceived as a door to stability (economically and emotionally), belonging, and freedom. The thought of losing their status brought intense fear because it was equated with losing a sense of belonging and freedom, even if it was in a very limited sense.




“My Mom has a residency and is still afraid to go out of the country because of all the injustices. Knowing and being aware of her surroundings, looking out for the police knowing what can happen.”

“My papers may have expired but my life has not expired.”

Fear of Sharing Information

People described opting to live in the shadows for fear that their immigration status would be discovered by a government agency or official, which would then lead to deportation. Disclosing any personal information was seen as risky and fraught with severe consequences to the point that the thought of being asked to give information to receive any services induced paralyzing fear.



“My friend is afraid of accepting any help from any institution or org because she thinks she will be handed over to police or ICE.”

Fear of Participating in the Movement

While not as widespread as the above-mentioned sources of fear, fear of participating in the movement came up in numerous listening sessions. People were clear about the need to be politically active for their own sake and that of their communities but were scared about government backlash against them if they participated in organizing campaigns. Leaders stated that this was particularly true given the current federal government’s policies towards immigrants and towards political participation.

TRAUMA

People identified trauma as a fundamental way they experience life in the U.S. They described both the sources and the impact of the trauma they live with day in and day out.

Sources of Trauma

1. Interactions with Law Enforcement

People described the extreme humiliation and abuse they experienced during various types of interactions with law enforcement, including border patrol, police, ICE agents, and detention personnel. The situations described ranged from crossing the border to ICE detention to raids and multiple local police encounters. Even visiting a detention center to see a loved one through the window caused traumatic feelings and revictimization. Participants highlighted the lack of transparency and information during these episodes as being fundamental to their traumatic feelings. One leader called it “psychological torture.”

“My Dad was deported. It made my relationship distant, our memories were lost. I am now the head of my household. We lost everything.”

“Crossing the security checkpoint in the airport, the police have seemingly made fun of me for not speaking English, and perhaps have directed me to wrong places which results in me being asked where I am going and feeling unsafe about where to go.”

“Women come in about their husbands beating them because they were too afraid to go to the police due to the fact that they are undocumented.”

“We should have a government-funded organization that helps undocumented people when they have a traumatic issue that they can’t go to the police about such as, domestic violence, sexual assault, and abuse. The informative given should stay secure and they should be about to give the undocumented community a safe haven to seek help.”

“We were detained at the border. It was really cold and uncomfortable. They told us that the cold was the punishment for crossing the border.”

2. Threat of Deportation

People often stated the ever-present possibility of deportation as a primary cause of trauma for individuals and family units.

“Trauma in children that remember events of seeing a parent taken away or being stopped by the police.”

“Por no saber Inglés y sus derechos los engañan para firmar su deportación.”

3. Family Crises

Pain and suffering of family members ranging from disagreements over choices about how to manage living while undocumented to family separations due to detentions and deportations were at the root of many people’s trauma. Some leaders described how they had to take on family responsibilities even though they were still children. This dynamic caused trauma because they had to mature too early.

“I had to leave school to help the family financially.”

“La posible perdida de TPS ha causado mucho estrés y trauma en las familias con estatus mixto, los padres y madres tienden a decidir regresar a sus países, pero a los hijos, esto les causa mucha angustia.”

4. Monetary Stress

Participants identified economic difficulties as a significant source of intense and lasting trauma. In particular, not being able to afford lawyers to defend themselves or family members during ICE proceedings, including bail or USCIS fees, was traumatic. The burden of the prohibitive cost and time to get “papers” had lasting mental health implications. Moreover, financial exploitation from fraudulent attorneys or “notarios” results in mental health costs as well as monetary ones. Loss of property because of police and ICE actions was also mentioned, such as police taking people’s cars once they were arrested and handed over to ICE. These actions impacted people’s ability to secure and maintain employment, thus adding to financial vulnerability and crises. One leader stated that government officials have no regard for immigrants creating capital in the U.S., even as private property and ownership are idolized and enshrined in U.S. law and society.

“No nos dan seguro de salud, el tax id - no nos dan nada.”

“Pedimos leyes justas, la oportunidad de aplicar para programas como las estampillas para comprar comida.”

“They did fire my parents from a job that they had for 20 years.”

“If we get sick what happens? If we get sick we get a huge bill, we can’t even afford to go to the doctor.”

“It’s hard because we don’t have money because we don’t have a green card. So we don’t have social security numbers. So we can’t get work.”

5. Workplace Exploitation

People made numerous references to trauma resulting from discrimination and exploitation in the workplace. They also identified abuse in the form of sexual harassment and wage theft.

“Tengo una hija que es viuda. Solo tiene 25 años y tiene DACA. Mi esposo es el único que esta trabajando y como es indocumentado le pagan menos y si se enferma en el trabajo no le permiten irse a la casa. Pero si fuera blanco, los dejan irse. Mi esposo tiene que tomar una pastilla y ir a trabajar.”

“All my grandparents, they came here, worked here, it’s a family tradition of migrant behavior. When it’s convenient they have us here...When they are done with us, they don’t want us anymore.”

6. Constraints on Education

People described not having educational opportunities as a trauma. Given that immigrants’ education is one of the main goals for their children and sometimes for themselves, limits on educational opportunities resulting from barriers caused by not having legal immigration status or financial pressures have a profound negative effect.

“We encounter many barriers even though we qualify, we have potential...Takes a toll mentally. I was depressed and sad. I have impostor syndrome, where you lie to yourself. It’s the society that lies to us. Takes a lot of effort to pick yourself up. What can I do to overcome this? I have to remind myself that I am not alone. Brings you down when you don’t feel like you’re enough. It affects me with my job and career. I’m done not having access. I’m done.”

7. Uncertainty

Finally, living with constant uncertainty over the years and sometimes decades was determined to be the source of trauma. Over and over again, in many manifestations, people expressed a deep yearning for predictability and stability.

“What are we supposed to do with all we’ve created here? Nothing is ours, not even our dreams.”

“Mentally I’m pessimistic. I have to save up, something can happen. Am always thinking ahead. Living in the present should be appreciated. No certainty; I can’t get too comfortable. With DACA I thought I could relax. They don’t think about the mental space that we had.”

Impact of Trauma

1. Sense of Powerlessness and Hopelessness

Leaders described powerlessness and hopelessness as the result of the many injustices they live with that cause trauma, as stated above. In particular, participants’ inability to keep their family together, protected, or make progress by getting a better job, higher wages, and education led people to feelings of powerlessness and hopelessness. One leader described it as “impotence.”

“People are feeling isolated and alone like they are in prison.”

2. Mental Health Implications

Ongoing persistent trauma without access to mental health services has long-term severe mental health implications. One leader identified the deep sense of abandonment that many children whose parents have been deported live with daily.

“I want to be free from those that are after you. Escape that mentality that you’re always being chased after.”

“Every time I go out, I am afraid.”

3. Physical Implications

The impact of trauma on people's health outcomes is countless. Our leaders identified health consequences such as heart attacks, strokes, inability to sleep, loss of appetite, trembling and crying. Moreover, people complained about not having access to medical care.

"No nos atienden en el hospital y otros lados, porque no hablamos inglés. No nos pagan el trabajo como un blanco."

"Church members are living in fear with the knowledge that they can be deported at any time. This causes the people with pre-existing medical conditions to develop hypertension."

"A friend that has been in the US for 15 years was called in by ICE about a DUI but he was so scared about the appointment with ICE, he had a stroke. That is how much panic he had."

"People have so much panic they shake. I mean they are literally shaking."

4. Loss of Identity and Traditions

Finally, there was lamenting over the loss of people's cultural wealth due to the multitude of challenges immigrants face here but primarily the pervasive sense of being deeply disrespected on so many levels and by so many individuals that immigrants interface with every day. Participants identified this dynamic as interconnected with racism.

"People feel safer hiding in the shadows, both immigrants, LPRs (legal permanent residents), and folks who got their status. They feel safe, because they need to hide their language and culture because of all this racism and not feeling they have the same rights."

"Being undocumented forces families to break customs."

RACISM

Listening campaign participants identified racism as central to their experiences of oppression. They identified racism on several levels - interpersonal, institutional, and societal. Leaders described racism on the part of the government, the workplace, and society at large.

Racist Government

Leaders focused much of their discussion across most listening sessions on public officials' racist actions at all government levels. They see our current government structures as deeply anti-immigrant and discriminatory based on race. Moreover, they argued that the current federal administration is intentionally stoking the flames of racism. For example, policies such as the travel ban on people from African countries were connected to racism. Another example is police interactions that lead to high fines and or confiscation of one's property. People understood these practices as racist because most often, the victims on which police and government profit are people of color. Over and over again, leaders shared stories of driving and being pulled over by police officers for no apparent reason and then being subjected to abuse and humiliation. People saw these interactions as racially motivated.

"This government gives more money to cops than to schools and that's wrong, we need to be a more educated society. The largest corporations are gaining money from incarcerating people. The majority of the people being affected are Black and Brown."

"Que el gobierno y los centros de detención no lucren con el dolor de nuestra gente. Los centros de detención son compañías privadas, que reciben dinero de acuerdo a cuantas personas tienen detenidas."

Workplace Racism

Mention of discrimination and racism in the workplace was widespread throughout the listening sessions. Exploitation was described as the result of people not having legal immigration status and lacking English language proficiency. They mentioned that employers know that if you have no immigration status you are unlikely to file complaints and thus you are vulnerable to all types of exploitation.

"Las leyes están al contrario de los trabajadores."

Racist Society

Finally, leaders painted a picture of society that is characterized by normalized racism. They had deep suspicions that most of their neighbors are racist. These perceptions were based on many experiences of being profiled in public for the color of their skin and/or lack of English language proficiency. In listening sessions composed of Black immigrants, people shared that being Black had a greater effect on their experience in the country, particularly with police, than their country of origin, accent, or immigration

They also highlighted the issue that Black immigrants are often left out of the conversations about immigration. People mentioned that there needs to be more grassroots communications with Black immigrant communities.

“I carry mine and my kids’ passports around all the time because I’m afraid our citizenship will be questioned.”

“Immigrants are seen as parasites not as contributors to the development of the U.S. even though we are taxpayers.”

COVID-19 IMPACTS

The pandemic and its devastating effects were on all leaders’ minds. COVID-19 came up often in the conversations. Above all, people lamented not having access to healthcare because they lacked immigration status. They also repeatedly stated that jobs were even harder to find now, which caused their families increased vulnerability. They lost their sources of income and did not have enough money for food or rent. Yet, despite having great need, leaders did not receive stimulus checks from the federal government. Moreover, they did not feel safe applying for help from non-profit organizations because of the fear of sharing their personal information. Finally, some identified the impacts that COVID-19 has had on visa processing.

“Even in the time of a pandemic we are still afraid of being stopped and yet we are told we are essential.”

“No estoy trabajando desde Marzo y no he podido conseguir trabajo y vivo con el temor de que el ICE me agarre y me deporté, y no es bueno vivir así.”

“Afectado mucho y peor en la pandemia, todavía hay que trabajar, soy mayor y en peligro de la coronavirus, es injusto, no hay de comer.”

“Mi familia ha sido impactada porque ser indocumentada no tiene los mismos derechos y no fuimos beneficiados con el alivio económico.”

“In relation to the pandemic, we have seen loss of work, a lot of places are closing. The pandemic has affected us...we are not given things, because we are undocumented. Children of undocumented people are not being helped.”

“I cannot get citizenship for my family from China, they cannot come here. The pandemic has made it worse for Asians.”

“On the immigration level, things have become harder now. I have a friend who filed for the wife and kids to come, and as soon as they got their visas to come, the coronavirus happened, and now their visas are expired. They are going to have to reapply and pay another visa fee. It’s just not right. They should at least waive visa fees.”

“I live near the detention center. Immigrant rights activists are camped outside the detention center since May. There have been protests for the release of people there, because [of] COVID-19. Heard of cases of people inside suffering from reactions to harsh chemicals being used inside the detention center used to sanitize [because of] COVID.”

“With COVID, the undocumented have lost their jobs but they can’t get help from the government because they are afraid of the police. Without the police, everyone could access whatever services they needed.”



FINDINGS PART 2: CREATING A BELOVED COMMUNITY

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Listening Session Questions:

Let's imagine a world and a country where we all share the responsibility to make the rules and govern.

1. In that world, what would immigration look like? What would you be able to do that you can't do now?
2. Can you imagine a world without ICE or Border Patrol? What would that look and feel like?
3. Can you imagine a world without police? What would that look and feel like?

Leaders responded to these questions with the following key themes.

JUST LAWS THAT ENSURE FAMILY UNITY

Above all, listening campaign participants expressed a deep longing for a world where their families were permanently together and safe. Leaders desired to protect their loved ones from forcible separation by the U.S. government enforcement systems and policies was mentioned multiple times in every single listening session across the country. There was a clear singular focus on a course of rules that would ensure family unity. Leaders' insistence on a just system of rules may reveal 1) an ability to identify and describe macro-level structural root causes; and, perhaps, 2) resistance to decades of being labeled "illegal" by co-opting law and order language. Again and again, leaders yearned for a legal process that would enable them to follow the rule of law and live "honestly."

"Al presidente le pidiera una manera de ser ciudadano sin tantos requisitos ... la oportunidad de vivir honestamente."

"ICE should stop chasing us, we feel being chased. We want to follow the law but are not given the opportunity to do so."

"A system that is not focused on punishment. In my ideal world, immigration would be less punitive and they would be more focused on family unity."

Across the board, people in the listening sessions yearned for immigration laws that were truly just. There was a consistent call in many sessions for rules based on "fairness for ALL people." People wanted laws that would allow them to stay together with their

loved ones and enable them to work legally and provide financial stability for their families. According to leaders, it appears that the litmus test for just immigration law is the extent to which it creates opportunities for families to remain together and have long-term stability. While some people described a system of immigration based on merit reminiscent of the historical narrative of “deserving” and “undeserving,” the vast majority of people hoped for immigration laws accessible to all and were based on fair treatment across the board.

“I would hope more people would be able to get access to a pathway to citizenship and it would not be so expensive to seek safety.”

“La gobernación debe ser para todos no solo para un grupo.”

“Que se elaboran las leyes pensando en todos, no en unos cuantos.”

Some people called for an executive order:

“The president should be able to reform the citizenship process without having so many requirements and such a long wait.”

Leaders referred to just immigration laws in a multitude of ways, including these:

- Amnesty for undocumented persons
- Legalization
- Green cards for all
- Pathway to citizenship
- A simple path to naturalization
- A path to citizenship for DACA and TPS recipients
- Drivers licenses for all
- Work permit for all
- Elimination or waiver of 10-year bar
- End to privatized detention centers
- Lower application fees for immigration benefits
- A new category of status for people fleeing war, famine, economic disasters and other refugees
- Advance parole to travel to home country and return to the United States
- Elderly can’t travel and need to be able to stay in the US permanently

FREEDOM

At the root of people's yearnings in multiple arenas was freedom.

Freedom of Movement

Leaders saw the ability to travel as essential to uniting and keeping families together. They yearned to visit relatives still living in their home countries or relatives deported back to home countries. They lamented missing important family events such as deaths or marriages both abroad and in other states because of the real fear that traveling exposes them to being detained. People described the intense fear of traveling - rooted in horrible border crossing histories and experiences of driving while undocumented - as paralyzing. One leader said she prohibited her daughter from going to college outside of California because of fear of traveling.

"It hurts us to have to choose between being with our parents or our children. We have to choose here or there."

"Changes I would want are to get immigration reform...especially for our parents. They're old and some would like to go visit the country where they were born... We've been here for almost half of my life."

"We can go and bury our people in our countries."

"Nos gustaría que la USA tenga un sistema como en Europa, no necesitas tener una visa para viajar por todo Europa. Así debería de ser en USA. Algo ideal sería que la gente pueda elegir donde estar y vivir sin ningún problema."

"Migrant workers used to come, work, then go - but now stay since borders are closed."

"We need permits or papers. With a permit, we would be safer. A visa to go to Mexico and come back. Some of us have parents back home and also family here."

Across many sessions, leaders imagined and painted a picture of a world with no borders. People not only wanted to travel across state and national boundaries but over and over again conceived and consistently articulated this dream - **a world without borders** so everyone can move freely.

“Sin patrulla de la frontera, sin fronteras, habría más libertad para la gente, también no hay que tener pasaportes, así que los alguaciles de la frontera a veces son de mi raza pero están en contra de su propio pueblo.”

“In an ideal world there would be no borders. There would be no need for border patrol. There would be no need to have a militarized police force because we each take responsibility in ourselves to live the golden rule.”

Government surveillance was identified as a concern in a listening session with Muslim leaders. Leaders imagined a world where Muslim people were free from surveillance.

Freedom of Self-Determination

People expressed a deep desire to be the authors of their own lives. They described life as an immigrant as full of constraints, uncertainty, and limits in the first section of the listening sessions. One individual said it felt like they had chains on all the time. Another leader remarked that it feels as though they are “prisoners” even when not detained. People identified discrimination and racist immigration policies as the chains holding them back from living their full potential.

Immigrant leaders yearned for the ability to determine when, where, and how to travel, drive, work, study, live, and plan ahead for their families with peace and freedom from fear. People expressed wanting options to accomplish their dreams such as decision-making power to choose their homes, pursue educational opportunities and goals, and find meaningful work.

“We have no voice and no vote. Even if we speak, people don’t listen to us. We have no papers but we are still human. But they don’t see that.”

“In an ideal world we will have self-sufficient communities. We need to think about what we need so that we don’t have racist institutions.”

“We would be able to work freely – I would work as a nurse for which I was trained.”

Freedom from Racist Law Enforcement

1. Freedom from ICE

Across most listening sessions, leaders imagined the elimination of ICE. They said:

“A world without ICE is a world of freedom and peace.”

“No ICE or CBP - a blessing”

“We can live without ICE. ICE has been empowered to do whatever they want to do. They don’t have any accountability.”

“A world without ICE is a world where the undocumented won’t have to live with the fear of looking over their shoulders constantly or being deported to a country where their lives are in danger because of civil or political unrest.”

People wanted freedom from ICE and laid out some of their thoughts on what would have to happen for ICE to be eliminated. They thought the elimination of ICE was possible if “we had better laws.” People highlighted the interconnectedness of many issues and argued that freedom from ICE wouldn’t be possible without solving other issues.

Peace was connected to the elimination of ICE.

“Peace is knowing my parents will not be deported.”

2. Freedom from Racist Police

In contrast to the desire to eliminate ICE, the vast majority of leaders said police were necessary to protect communities from crime. However, people expressed very clear concerns with the current form of policing. Leaders described our current system of policing as harmful and oppressive to both immigrant and Black communities. They expressed time and time again a need for deep changes to American policing. Leaders envisioned a world where police were 1) not racist; 2) not inhumane and abusive; 3) focused on helping people in need; and 4) not collaborating with ICE. In short, while leaders did not want to eliminate police, they did want significant changes to policing.

“The police have lost their conscience. They were supposed to be protecting [people] but they are racist. I guess they were always racist and now they have extra liberty because of the President.”

“A world without police would be good because they would stop attacking us - but on the other hand, we need the police to keep criminals in check.”

"The changes that need to happen with police is training, or at least some understanding, of the prejudices that officers have towards people of color. There should be training and other protocols followed to ensure that officers make changes to improve their interactions with individuals."

"I don't think it would be possible to get rid of the police... They should not be given the resources and given the power that they are given. They are getting called for everything and they don't have the expertise. Their training is to be brutal. Brutality has been happening. Technology is allowing us to see what is happening. Police are needed but they need more reform and need more representation. They don't really understand the community."

"We need the police but we need them not to abuse their power."

"La policía deben ser más justos, más humanos y con más disciplina. Nos sentiríamos inseguros sin policía pero no policías corruptos."

"Hay que botar las policías injustas y mantener una policía buena para evitar crimen. Policía tiene que existir para que los habitantes tengan recursos de seguridad, pero con respeto y amor para su trabajo y el pueblo."

"La policía es necesaria, para mantener el orden, pero no hay que tener policía racista."

"On a national level, we need to change how we train police; give them an empathy test."

"Police are needed but they should not have collaboration with ICE."

"Don't get rid of police entirely, although they do get unnecessary money and they need to be put through more training."

"Police are needed for civil purposes, to help people, to prevent crime. But they need to change training which is biased towards certain groups. They need to look at mental & social aspects of people. Military equipment is unnecessary. Police should not be involved in immigration. Police assume guilt immediately. They should separate police & immigration, they are 2 different jobs."

A few individuals offered a different analysis:

“I feel like having another institution that is not the police would work better.”

“I think it’s possible to defund the police and redistribute those resources to local organizations.”

Economic Freedom

Central to people’s description of a better world was freedom to leverage and create economic opportunities. Leaders expressed longing for economic stability and freedom from financial uncertainty. People defined economic stability as the ability to save money, plan for their children’s future, and own a home. They dreamed of access to better jobs with higher pay and good working conditions. People expressed a desire to be treated fairly, and to have access to unemployment benefits and COVID-19 stimulus checks.

“I feel that I am being treated like a criminal when all I did was come to America for a better life for me and my family. I am a general contractor by trade, which requires me to travel for work. But because of the ankle bracelet, I am limited to where I can go and how long I can stay out. I feel like I am being punished over and over again when all I am trying to do is provide the American dream for my family. I just want to work, pay taxes and be a productive citizen.”

“Necesitamos derechos: igualdad, pensión, seguro de salud, días personales - libre.”

BELONGING

Leaders described an ever-present feeling of unwelcome. People shared that they felt like an outsider no matter how many years they lived in the United States. At the most extreme, people described a feeling of “nonexistence.” The sentiment of being not welcomed or being viewed as an outsider was prevalent throughout the sessions. In contrast, leaders named the notion of belonging as central to their ideal world.

“Me siento como que si no existo yo, ni mi familia. No tenemos las oportunidades que merecemos pero seguimos contribuyendo a la comunidad.”

“I feel as though I don’t exist and neither does my family. We don’t have the opportunities that we deserve yet we continue contributing to the community.”

“Even in a world without ICE, we will still be looked at as if we don’t belong. That is the root of the issue.”

“El presidente tiene que conocer que lo más importante es la comunidad, la familia entonces quiero que piensa en eso, piensa en la comunidad, eso es importante porque no somos solos ninguno sino somos parte de la comunidad entera.”

Belonging through Legal Status

People shared a desire for permanent legal status as one pathway towards belonging. Many people in the listening sessions had liminal legality, such as DACA or TPS, or had no immigration status, and communicated a desire to live in the U.S. permanently without being vulnerable to deportation. Participants described status as: papers, status, green cards, and citizenship. While some people thought access to permanent legal status, regardless of its name, should be based on merit of some kind, the vast majority of people imagined a world where all immigrants could access permanent legal immigration status. Leaders indicated that permanent legal status was a means to “belong” in this country.

Full Participation in Society

In many ways, people expressed a deep longing to have the opportunity to fully participate in society. Moreover, leaders described that participation in terms of both rights and responsibilities. They described full participation in many ways:

1. Political Participation

Leaders described a desire to organize their communities without fear of state repression. People identified organizing and political participation as important to strengthen the community’s voice and solve problems. They talked often of being able to vote. People described political representation as community power to decide the laws and dialogue with the government as necessary.

“Estaría más tranquila, con más seguridad con mi familia, con las mismas responsabilidades y derechos que tienen otros. Podemos pedir leyes más justas para todos, y también tendremos la responsabilidad de someter votos.”

“It would be best if the people were in charge of approving the laws.”

“Tenemos que educarnos también, no solo a la policía, y saber reclamar nuestros derechos. Hay que trabajar juntos.”

“Podemos vivir con más seguridad, sin miedo, y podríamos contribuir al proceso de mantener la gobernación.”

“Podría trabajar sin miedo y proveer para mi familia. También podría dar a los pobres y para los niños que no tienen familia.”

“Podría salir a votar para elegir a las personas correctas que tuvieran calidad de servicio.”

“A change in laws and our representatives is needed. Not just white men, but also women, immigrants, and people of color in these positions.”

“I appreciated the DACA updates shared at the beginning [of this session], I have not been updated with what is going on. The constant updates and news make me sad, [and I’ve been] stressing about it every few months. It’s stressful. 2 years gives you a little peace, now it’s every year. I’m new to this experience of connecting with others who are facing these things. Feels like it’s the right moment to be in the movement. Finally the time to connect and share experiences. This is where the strength is. Being able to channel that anger into building the community...I was doing things on my own, now I know I can reach out for help. I am excited to team up and work together.”

2. Religious Participation

Leaders named religious freedom as essential. One leader described being consistently followed by the FBI when they go to the mosque. Another mentioned that ICE “force-fed” pork to Muslims in detention.

“Muslim leaders were arrested for being accused of being “terrorists” and deported for doing nothing wrong. Many Muslims are facing the same issues as the Hispanic community.”

“People look at us Muslims and assume we are terrorists. We face different yet similar issues; we face the same issues.”

3. Economic Participation

Leaders said they wanted to work hard, pay taxes, buy homes and contribute to their communities. People also named feeling resentful of the current situation in which they pay taxes to the government but feel unwanted and targeted for expulsion by the government.

“La mayoría de nosotros los indocumentados llenamos taxes y trabajamos duro, mas no tenemos los mismos derechos que tienen los demás. Nosotros no somos cargos públicos. Necesitamos unirnos y no tener miedo, al levantar nuestras voces.”

The theme of belonging was present throughout the listening sessions. The discussion of belonging encompassed a deep understanding of both the rights AND responsibilities of belonging, of membership in society.

Respect

Finally, leaders dreamed of being respected at all levels of interactions. They deeply want their humanity and identity to be respected. People dreamed of not having to “prove” their “worthiness.”

“Para el presidente, queremos trabajar, queremos salir adelante, háganos iguales como los ciudadanos, darse respeto a nuestra identidad qué somos latinos y somos seres humanos.”

Respect at the individual level encompassed being treated:


- like a human being and not a burden or nuisance during interactions with others
- with respect by the police - one couple was told to leave an area by a cop because they “didn’t belong”

Respect at the structural level included:

- no racism from the government
- respect from the government through just laws and fair transparent implementation of those laws
- protection provided by the government when they are victims of crime
- recognition of immigrants’ contributions to the U.S.

In the ideal world,

“Todos seríamos iguales, sin fronteras, sin racismo, seríamos más tranquilos para vivir.”



LA RED conducted five listening sessions with Black immigrants from African, Caribbean, and Latin American countries. Since most leaders who make up LA RED are non-Black Latinos, LA RED hosted specific and separate sessions for Black immigrants to create space for candid exploration and conversation. Additionally, LA RED started these listening sessions to invite Black immigrant leaders into the campaign. LA RED included a specific section of Black immigrant experiences to center their voices and experiences in the network and guide the organizing moving forward.

Consensus with Key Six Themes


Black immigrant listening session participants identified the same themes and patterns as immigrants in the rest of the listening sessions, which were by and large composed of non-Black Latinos. In other words, the findings described above in Part 1 and Part 2 also reflect the experiences and thinking of Black immigrants who participated in the listening sessions.

Race is Central to the Immigrant Experience

Black immigrants described racism as the dominant experience. Their experience of racism was in sharp contrast to non-black Latino immigrants. Non-Black Latino immigrants expressed a lack of immigration status as the primary reason for their oppression. Non-Black Latino leaders also spoke of racism throughout all the sessions. Still, in their understanding of the challenges they face, lack of immigration status was identified as the main obstacle. For Black immigrants, racism was identified as the fundamental problem. In the listening sessions, Black immigrants shared story after story of being pulled over by police for no other reason than the color of their skin.

“Being a Black man has been more impactful for me than being an immigrant. I’ve had more trouble because I’m black and a tall man with dreadlocks. But once I have an interaction with the police and they hear my accent, they want to know where I am from. It’s exhausting living in a constant fear and anxiety. I have a son who is 18 and I still treat him like a baby because I’m scared of what will happen when he leaves the house. We are Green Card holders but we are also Black men in a country that makes it abundantly clear that we are neither welcomed nor valued. It’s exhausting.”

Black immigrants’ experiences of racist police interaction were described as “ever-present”, “constant” and “debilitating.. Leaders described the ongoing impacts of these interactions as significant.



FINDINGS PART 3: BLACK IMMIGRANT LISTENING SESSIONS

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"I've had bad experiences with the police. I was pulled over for no reason - because I'm black - and the police officer gave me 8 tickets and said my licence wasn't valid when it was. I was so angry and felt so afraid when the judge was reading all the things against me. I will never drive again in America because I feel so afraid of the police."

"Were this notion about skin color totally eliminated, that would solve lots of challenges in going through the immigration process."

In addition to descrimination based on race, many Black immigrants also shared how the United States targeted or erased their national identities.

"The U.S. likes to erase our identities. I am a Ghanaian and Nigerian American. They like to say Irish or Italian but lump us all in as Black."

"The travel ban ... was a list of countries and being from West Africa myself, and the fact that Nigeria is on that list has impacted us in so many ways. It's impacted friends and family just coming to visit us. The change on so called legal immigration has been so restrictive, it's been hard. People coming for school are giving up altogether to come and study in the U.S. because it's just so difficult now. People are going to other places now to study because there are more opportunities in other countries to study right now. The rhetoric keeps looking down on African immigrants - makes us all feel bad. Like, why should I even stay here? We chose to come here because we thought there were opportunities here and now we are being targeted and now we [don't] feel welcomed."

Leaders also used the analytic lens of the history of European colonialism in Africa to explain the conditions of racism and erasure that Black immigrants experience here. Responding to the question of creating a world where we all share responsibility to make the rules and govern, one leader said:

"This is a weighty question, we all have this instinct to migrate. A world where people can feel successful no matter where they are. In this world we have now, I think it would have to start with a study of history. The [reason] African countries are the way they are is because of colonialism, even traveling between African countries is very hard... the US is a neo-colonial power. We have to be honest about our history and the reasons why migration is necessary and maybe start there."

Exclusion from National Conversation on Immigration


Finally, Black immigrants highlighted the need for LA RED to organize and create opportunities for leadership within Black immigrant communities. Leaders stated that Black immigrant voices are often missing in the national conversation around immigration.

“There should be more opportunities by LA RED to be aware of Black immigrant voices. Hispanics have been the ones who have been pursuing certain legislation. LA RED needs to be proactive, to be in Black immigrant communities. If we aren’t proactive in talking to people, they won’t come. We need more grassroots communications in Black immigrant communities and to let their voices be heard.”

Leaders’ comments also reflected a sense of solidarity across race and national origin such as this leader who argued for having a “united front.”

“I think we can be more visible. Black immigrants have the responsibility to speak up and be more visible in this fight. Especially because our Lantix siblings are being targeted. We need to have a voice and a united front to help our brothers and sisters in other communities. We need to be more visible.”





The experience of undocumented immigrants in the United States has always been challenging regardless of the administration in power. The initial shock over President Trump's election and immediate use of the executive office's broad power to expand the number of immigrants subject to deportation resulted in a wave of terror still felt today. Yet, despite the obstacles of the last four years, immigrant families aspire to fully belong in our communities and our nation.


The listening campaign findings confirm the last four years have exacted an unprecedented collective trauma perpetrated by the state on immigrant communities. Together, we learned that immigrant people, across race, felt an extreme sense of fear, emotional trauma, and pervasive racism. Fear of being separated from family was the most common fear. Leaders consistently identified the agents of anxiety, trauma, and discrimination to be Immigration and Customs Enforcement, the police, and, for some, Customs and Border Protection.

We also learned that immigrant people longed for freedom and belonging in the United States. Listening sessions' participants imagined a world where all are free to travel, work, study, and plan for their families with peace and free from fear. Above all, participants expressed a deep longing for a world where their families were permanently together and safe. Participants mentioned multiple times in every listening session the urgent priority to protect their families from being forcibly separated by the U.S. government.

The stories and experiences shared by Black and non-Black immigrants alike revealed many similarities. Both Black immigrants and non-Black immigrants from Latin American countries greatly feared police and ICE and cited abusive and racialized experiences with law enforcement in the United States. They shared hopes and dreams of a world of belonging and freedom, one where there are just laws that protect family unity. While there were many similarities in the stories and experiences shared by Black and Brown immigrants, Black immigrants shared that race was central to how they experience life in the United States in contrast to non-Black Latinos. The latter shared a lack of immigration status as defining their hardships in the United States. Black immigrants also provided a valuable critique of the immigrant rights movement, citing the lack of Black immigrants in immigrant justice organizing and feeling excluded by the immigrant rights movement.

As immigration organizers, advocates, clergy and lay people, we believe this report has significant insights that pertain to organizing with immigrant people and significant implications for lawmakers and faith institutions. The last four years of state sponsored violence are responsible for the intense amount of fear and trauma described in this report. To achieve the beautiful vision of a just and fair world described by immigrant leaders in the listening sessions, lawmakers and faith institutions will have to join immigrant communities in actively pursuing our vision for an honest, just, and equitable world.





On October 14, 2020, over 120 Faith in Action leaders and clergy attended an online organizing meeting entitled, Our Stories, Our Futures: A Report Back from the LA RED Listening Campaign. The meeting was a celebration of the organizing, mobilizing, and campaigning in defense of immigrant families over the last four years, a public report on what LA RED learned in the listening campaign, and space where we sought post-2020 election alignment. Immigrant leaders who led listening sessions and participated in the data analysis led the meeting.

LA RED leaders, clergy, and staff proclaimed and affirmed, based on the findings of the listening campaign, the following vision:

Create a World of Belonging


- We will build the beloved community, where we all belong to each other no matter our skin color, the faith we practice, or the language we speak. A place that values human dignity and respects all people. We will dismantle the systems and cultures of white supremacy and anti-Blackness in our communities that create barriers to our and others' belonging. We will create a belonging community where all people are free to move, work, worship, and pursue their passions.

Hold Family Unity Sacred

- We will create a world where all families are together, not separated by borders, detention, unfair and unjust immigration laws, deportation, or incarceration. We will fight for laws and policies that promote family unity and dignity for ALL immigrants, regardless of skin color, country of origin, faith, or history.

Freedom and Liberation of All People


- We recognize our liberation is tied to the liberation of Black, Indigenous, and colonized people from all corners of the world. We will interrupt systems of oppression by fighting to free us from fear, uncertainty, racism, and undue trauma. We will end systems that exploit people and the earth for profit. We will pursue equal access to healthcare, fair wages, workers' rights, education, and financial stability. We are committed to liberation and will fight for just, moral, and humane immigration laws for all people.



There is a need for more robust political and economic analysis shared by immigrant leaders across geography, race, and faith. It is incumbent on organizers to offer these critical analytic tools to leaders. We propose creating development opportunities for leaders to wrestle with systemic racism, internalized beliefs, how wealth is transferred from the poor to the rich, and how monied interests use white supremacy to divide communities by race. We believe this form of training and development is imperative to building cross-race immigrant solidarity and powerful cross-movement organizing. Since fear and trauma are also significant barriers to organizing and public power, addressing trauma and its impacts must be prioritized together with storytelling and voter engagement.

Based on the conversations and research, LA RED has the following recommendations for organizing and the immigrant rights movement:

1. Invest time and money into programs building intentional relationships and organizing with Black immigrants and immigrants from countries outside of Latin America.
2. Conduct political education and engage in critical consciousness-raising with leaders about the criminalization of Brown and Black people and the disparate impact of capitalism to interrogate their beliefs around policing and meritocracy.
3. Build and host healing spaces that foster resilience, center cultural practices and traditions, and create a container for people to process fear and trauma. Develop programming with directly impacted healing and trauma experts or experts with an understanding of the community. Centering healing will allow leaders to find safety and step into their courage and power.
4. Prioritize collective story sharing, emphasizing critical reflection on individual experiences to build community, agency, and power. Systemic oppressions succeed in isolating and alienating people, thereby inhibiting collective strength and resistance to exploitation systems. Community-building strategies like the listening sessions break down isolation and open people's imagination.
5. Grow voter education and outreach programs to expand the number of voters with favorable views on immigration. Expand the number of immigrant citizens and persons in mixed-status families voting in elections to build electoral power.



The cost of inaction is too high. Lawmakers and faith institutions must heed the call of impacted communities and take bold and immediate action. To realize the collective vision put forth by 715 immigrant leaders, LA RED calls on lawmakers and faith institutions to do the following:

Lawmakers

- Advocate for an immediate moratorium on deportations as a first step toward ending detention and deportation.
- Pass just, and humane immigration legislation with a path to citizenship that protects family unity, creates opportunities for long-term stability and allows people the freedom to travel.
- Include undocumented and mixed-status families in any legislation, including COVID-19 relief, healthcare, education initiatives, and worker rights.
- Grant all persons, regardless of immigration status, access to drivers licenses in every state.
- Prohibit state and local governments and law enforcement from enforcing immigration policy.
- Overhaul law enforcement policies that protect racist and violent police and reallocate funding from bloated police budgets to proven strategies and community services that reduce crime and violence.
- Repeal Trump administration executive orders, including but not limited to the Muslim bans, travel restrictions, orders to expand interior and border enforcement, expansion of detention and limitations on refugees and asylum seekers.
- Protect, expand eligibility, consider new applications, and reinstitute advance parole for Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) and Temporary Protective Status (TPS).
- Divest tax dollars from the Department of Homeland Security, including ICE and CBP, and invest the money in policies and programs that support immigrant communities' aspirations of equal access to healthcare, education, and good jobs.
- Implement a new framework for U.S. policy toward Central America and Mexico to address underlying conditions (e.g., poverty, violence, corruption, climate change), which compel people from the region to leave their home countries. Adopt new approaches that prioritize demilitarization, community-led development, education, public health, and creating avenues for safe migration.

Faith Institutions and Leaders

- Confront the legacy of white supremacy that persists within historically white Christian faith communities.
- Implement anti-racism formation programs to promote racial solidarity and racial justice work.
- Consistently lay out a vision of the Beloved Community, rooted in core faith stories and values, emphasizing that we need and belong to one another.
- Take more risks to publicly resist rhetoric and policies that dehumanize and traumatize immigrant communities.

