

Core values

- **Treat all individuals and border communities with dignity**
- **Increase accountability and transparency**
- **End unsafe deportation practices**
- **Choose border security strategies that respect the environment, land owners and human rights**

Current border enforcement policies have torn families and communities apart, devastated our congregations, contributed to the deaths of thousands of migrants traveling in remote desert regions, and violated the rights of U.S. citizens and immigrants alike. In 2014 alone, the United States spent more than \$18 billion of taxpayers' money on the machinery of immigration enforcement, more than is spent on all other federal law enforcement agencies combined. Above all else, enforcement policies must treat all individuals with respect and dignity, as they are created in the image of God.

“Migrants present a particular challenge for me, since I am the pastor of a Church without frontiers, a Church which considers herself mother to all. For this reason, I exhort all countries to a generous openness... rather than fearing the loss of local identity.”

Pope Francis
Evangelii Gaudium

Over the past twenty years the federal government has dramatically increased border fencing and militaristic infrastructure, stifling the economic viability and quality of life of U.S. border communities. Accountability and transparency has remained elusive; Customs and Border Patrol agents are poorly advised about the use of lethal force and Customs and Border Patrol has had at least 46 fatal shootings since 2004. Only 13 out of 809 complaints of abuse against agents were

responded to by the CBP between 2009 and 2012 and misconduct allegations increased by 62 percent from 2006 to 2011. Remarkably, the vast majority of congressional proposals continue to lack accountability language.

Immigration enforcement has negatively impacted the civil and human rights of border residents, encouraging racial profiling and sowing distrust and fear between communities and law enforcement entities. Border enforcement policies threaten fragile eco-systems and already endangered species, desecrate sacred sites, violate religious freedom, damage public lands, and interfere with land owners who operate businesses and live along the border.

The face of immigration

Humberto

Humberto, a 16-year-old Zapotec indigenous child from the southern state of Oaxaca, Mexico, attempted to cross into the U.S. through the Arizona desert with his uncle. Humberto's goal was to reunite with his mother, who had left when he was three years old.

Humberto was raised by his grandmother and supported by the remittances his mother sent home from her agricultural work in California's Central Valley. When his grandmother died, Humberto decided to make the perilous journey with his uncle. After walking through the desert for three days, they were apprehended by the U.S. Border Patrol, and Humberto was separated from his uncle without explanation. Humberto was deported and placed into a shelter for unaccompanied youth in Nogales, Mexico.

Only after arriving at the shelter was Humberto allowed to contact his mother to let her know what had happened. At that time he learned that his uncle had been separated from him because he had been charged with “illegal re-entry,” and was required to spend six months in a U.S. prison.

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A need to end dangerous deportation practices

Many of the more than 2 million deportations carried out under the Obama Administration have been implemented in a way that imperils the lives of migrants, violating a 2004 bilateral agreement between the U.S. and Mexico to carry out “safe, dignified, orderly and humane” repatriations. Congressional action should provide robust oversight and codify standards for humane treatment of migrants apprehended, incarcerated, or deported by Customs and Border Patrol (CBP) and Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), including the following:

1. End all night-time deportations
2. End family separation during the deportation process
3. Do not deport individuals to particularly dangerous locations
4. Return all belongings prior to deportation, including money, cell phones and medication
5. Provide prior notification to Mexican authorities of persons with special needs
6. Provide opportunities for regular community and NGO (Non-Governmental Organization) input into border policies and implementation

How do our faith principles inform our policy recommendations?

There is great need to revisit and reform our immigration system, including border enforcement priorities and methodology. Unfortunately the vast majority of legislative proposals would give greater authority and resources to the Customs and Border Patrol, an agency with a record of impunity for inhumane treatment of people near the border. Under this type of legislation, CBP spending could be increased by \$10 billion over the next 10 years for efforts to control migration flows while doing nothing to address the root causes of migration, meet critical humanitarian protection needs, or fix our broken immigration system. Rather than provide funding for CBP to further militarize the border, acquire surplus military equipment at no cost, increase drone surveillance, or provide CBP unlimited access to all land within 100 miles of all U.S. land and sea borders, we look for legislation that instead remedies the dangerous practices happening at the hands of an unwieldy government agency.

We support policies that first and foremost seek to protect families, communities and individuals along our borders. Rather than measure success based on the number of deportations carried out, we support legislation that prevents and holds DHS to account for practices that needlessly threaten lives and separate family members during the deportation process. Legislation that increases transparency, oversight and community input serves as a starting point for building trust and ensuring accountability. Border Patrol agents must have trainings on appropriate use of force and explicit regulations on civil and human rights practices. Our border policies and enforcement agencies should reflect the values of the nation, uplifting individuals and communities in need.

Resources:

Interfaith Immigration Coalition
interfaithimmigration.org

Migration Policy Institute
mpi.org

Immigration Policy Center
immigrationpolicy.org



Interfaith Immigration Coalition | interfaithimmigration.org | March 2015 | African American Ministers in Action • American Baptist Home Mission Societies of the American Baptist Churches, USA • American Friends Service Committee • American Jewish Committee • Bread for the World • Christian Reformed Church • Church of the Brethren • Church World Service • Columban Center for Advocacy & Outreach • Conference of Major Superiors of Men • Daughters of Charity • Disciples Justice Action Network (Disciples of Christ) • The Episcopal Church • Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) • Franciscan Action Network • Friends Committee on National Legislation • Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society • Interfaith Worker Justice • Irish Apostolate USA • Islamic Information Center • Jesuit Refugee Service • Jewish Council for Public Affairs • Leadership Conference of Women Religious • Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service • Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns • Mennonite Central Committee U.S. Washington Office • Muslim Public Affairs Council • National Advocacy Center of the Sisters of the Good Shepherd • National Council of Churches • National Council of Jewish Women • NETWORK, A Catholic Social Justice Lobby • Pax Christi USA • PICO National Network • Presbyterian Church USA, Immigration Issues Offices • Sisters of Mercy of the Americas • Sojourners • 3P Human Security • T'ruah: The Rabbinic Call for Human Rights • Union for Reform Judaism • Unitarian Universalist Association of Congregations • United Church of Christ, Justice and Witness Ministries • United Methodist Church, General Board of Church and Society • UNITED SIKHS • U.S. Jesuit Conference • World Relief



\$18 billion

Immigration enforcement
spending in FY2014

46

Fatal shootings by CBP agents
with no known consequences

6,300+

Number of persons who have
died trying to cross the U.S.-
Mexico border since 1998

Root causes

Successful immigration policy
must address the root causes of
migrations to the U.S.

- **“Push” factors:** violent conflict, natural disasters, economic distress, persecution, trade policies
- **“Pull” factors:** family, safety, employment, opportunity

Sources:

www.dhs.gov/sites/default/files/publications/FY15-BIB.pdf,

www.politico.com/magazine/story/2014/10/border-patrol-the-green-monster-112220.html